

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE



Big New
Serial
"THE MAN
INSIDE"

starts in this number

MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON · ANNE O'HAGAN · VIRGINIA MIDDLETON
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XI



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A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$1.50

SINGLE COPIES 15 CENTS

Monthly Publication Issued by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
 ORMOND G. SMITH, President, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City; GEORGE C. SMITH, Secretary and Treasurer,
 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

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 Entered as Second-class Matter, at the New York Post Office, according to an Act of
 Congress, March 3, 1879, by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE.

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Statement of ownership, management, circulation, etc., of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., required by the Act of August 24, 1912. Editor, Chas. A. MacLean, 218 82nd St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Managing editors, and business managers, Street & Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Publishers, Smith Publishing House, 89 7th Ave., New York, N. Y. Owners, Smith Publishing House, 89 7th Ave., New York, N. Y. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders, holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. Signed by George C. Smith, for Street & Smith. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 25th day of September, 1913, Chas. W. Ostertag, Notary Public, No. 2879, New York County. (My commission expires March 30th, 1915).

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 18

FEBRUARY, 1914

NUMBER 5

The Fair Godmother

By Margaret Belle Houston

Author of "Beyond the Border," "The Over-Praying of Amos," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

The Knave of Hearts
He made some tarts
Just as they should have been!

The Queen so wise
She saw those pies
And put her finger in!

TOUCH the bell, there, will you?" growled the big man with the bandaged leg.

It was the third time that he had issued this particular command, and since the bell remained untouched, he turned now and regarded the girl at the escritoire with puzzled scrutiny.

Very pretty she was as she sat writing with her fluent little jade-handled pen. Her cheeks were the color of her muslin frock, which was like the inside of peach blooms, and now and then a dimple dented their smooth outline as she smiled upon her task. Another dimple—a stationary one—resided in her willful little chin. Through the glass door beside her, a breeze, sweet with the scent of magnolias, moved lazily into the room and lifted the brown curls about her face, fluttering as if with languid laughter the freshly written page.

She turned a bit impatiently as if to close the door. And then she met the big man's gaze.

"Oh, Uncle Bobbin!" she cried, and rose quickly. "Did you speak to me? Do you want anything?"

"Touch the bell, there, will you?"

She pushed it vigorously.

"Hasn't Sam come in yet?"

The lieutenant regarded her witheringly.

"Do you see anything, my dear, that looks like Sam?"

"But I rang so long ago!" She stroked his hair with her left hand and patted his shoulder with her right. "Is it anything I can get for you, Uncle Bobbin?"

The maimed man twisted suddenly, and repressed a yell. He glared at her. "Oh, dear!" she said. "I don't know why it is, but I seem to hurt your leg no matter where I pet you."

And she moved, with injured dignity, back to the escritoire.

"You hurt my leg, Margaret, because you leaned on it."

Lieutenant Craig's dignity was also of the injured variety.

"Uncle Bobbin," broke forth the girl, "I wish you wouldn't call me 'my dear,' and 'Margaret'! If you knew how distant it makes me feel!"

"Well, Gretchen," answered the man, "I'm forced to state that the more distant you are, the safer I feel."

"The house is perfectly unbearable!" cried the girl. "I'm certainly glad you didn't break both legs."

The lieutenant was incensed by the implication. He braced himself suddenly on his hands.

"Ring that bell again, will you?" he said.

Gretchen sat down.

"I'll go send Sam up," she offered. "Let me add one more word to my letter, then I'll step out and post it. I feel the need of a walk."

"What is this additional word?" asked the lieutenant, watching her.

Gretchen flushed—hesitated—shook her head. Affectionately she moistened the flap of the envelope.

"You wouldn't understand," she said, "unless you read the whole letter. And I know you wouldn't care to do that."

He held out his hand.

"I shouldn't mind," he said. "Let's have it."

But she pounded the flap with a hasty little fist.

"I've—I've sealed it, Uncle Bobbin. I'm sorry. You ought to have spoken sooner." She came over to his chair, holding the letter behind her. "Good-by, for a little while. Do you think if I kiss the very tiptop of your bald spot I'll hurt your leg?"

"I shouldn't wonder," he growled.

But she kissed it—tremulously—precisely—briefly.

"There!" she exclaimed. "Did that hurt?"

"That was successful," he answered. Then he straightened in his chair, his eye lighting. "Hah!" he said.

For the door had opened, and a twinkling, white-haired old darky stood on the threshold, bearing a tray.

"Hah!" said the lieutenant, with growing fierceness. "So this is the hour that pleases you, is it, you good-for-nothing scamp? Am I to go downstairs and get you every time I want you to hand me something? Why don't you answer that bell?"

"De bell done busted, suh," explained the tranquil Sam. "De man a-fixin' of it now."

He arranged the contents of the tray on a near-by table, and wheeled the lieutenant into proper range.

"I'd like to know," thundered the maimed one, "who broke that bell? The way things—"

"Hit done been rang so much de las' two weeks, suh. De man say as how de batt'ry done squz plumb empty."

Gretchen dimpled.

"An excellent commentary, that," remarked the lieutenant, looking sternly from the grave, black face to the dimpling pink one, "on the spontaneous obedience that bell has elicited in the past. If you moved with fitting alacrity, Sam, the battery would be in corresponding order."

"Yessuh," said Sam.

He knew by his master's voice that he was being rebuked, but he made no attempt to follow through this maze of strange English.

"Have you everything you want?" asked Gretchen, edging toward the door.

Lieutenant Craig nodded, looking over his tray.

"All the ills that flesh is heir to," he answered, and salted his soup.

Gretchen had fetched her hat from the hall, and stood pinning it on, the great pink roses nodding about her face.

"If you had a wife——" she began profoundly, studying the effect in the mirror above the *escritoire*.

"Why, yes," admitted Uncle Bobbin, "things might be worse."

"I didn't mean that." Gretchen turned about. "Elinor says you'd be much better off if you were married. But if you *had* a wife, you couldn't go on *this* way. I don't believe any one who isn't really kin to you would stand for it. Except, of course, Sam, and he has to."

The lieutenant put his head on one side reflectively, as he permitted Sam to remove his soup plate.

"So Miss Vaile has done me the honor to discuss——"

He wiped his mustache very carefully.

Gretchen had started toward the glass door on the shortest route to the street.

"It was some time ago," she explained hurriedly. "Before you came home the last time. *Au revoir!*"

"Er—by the bye, Gretchen! Just a moment. Did—— What were we discussing when you flitted away like that? Oh, yes! Did Miss Vaile say anything else?"

Gretchen glanced at the little watch on her wrist.

"About you, Uncle Bobbin? Y-yes. She said— Oh, she said you were so witty!" Gretchen glanced down the driveway, through the great magnolia trees. "I'll tell you the rest when I come back," she added.

"Surely what Miss Vaile could have said of me was brief enough to be told shortly. Eh, Gretchen? What more did she say?" Then, breaking forth: "Why in thunder are you in such an outrageous hurry? Can't you have a little repose, Gretchen? It's offensive—your lack of poise. Now, sit down!"

Gretchen blinked, biting her lip. It was Uncle Bobbin who lacked poise—and wouldn't she just like to tell him so? Here she was, ten minutes late already, and if a certain person were kept waiting—

"Oh, dear!" cried Gretchen. "Elinor said you were—were charming."

"Not that I care," said Uncle Bobbin, pouring cream over his chop, then straightening suddenly, and frowning all manner of thunder at Sam, who removed the chop and gave him another. "Not that I care—but it's interesting to hear these little things. Yes, Gretchen?"

"So—so charming. That you were the relic——"

"The *what*? Did she say that since—since my accident?"

"Oh, not *that* kind of relic! She meant that your manners—your—your chivalry," floundered poor Gretchen, "belonged to an order that was passing away. Elinor expresses things so well, but I— Anyhow, she doesn't see how I put up with the men one meets everywhere when I have such a standard set me at home." And then, her nervous finger having trembled on the trigger long enough, she finally fired a shot: "Elinor really thinks that, too. I don't tell her *everything*."

The lieutenant twinkled.

"That's nice of you, Gretchen!"

"Oh, but I nearly forgot!" cried the girl. "Sam, if Miss Vaile comes while I'm gone, tell her I'll be back shortly."

"Ah!" said the lieutenant. "So you're expecting Miss Vaile?"

Gretchen's eyes fell.

"I had a note from her this morning. It was a *very* polite note. I—I think she means to lecture me about something. Not," she explained hastily, "not that I've done anything. But when Elinor writes polite notes, I usually watch out."

The lieutenant looked stern.

"Sure you haven't been naughty, Gretchen?"

The girl's chin lifted. Now, wasn't that like Uncle Bobbin? "Lack of poise," "*naughty*"! How young did he think she was? She disdained to reply, but, turning, her chin still lifted, she passed through the court, down the avenue of magnolias, and out through the carriage entrance, just as a limousine halted at the front gate.

Inside, the lieutenant hummed a little tune as Sam removed his tray. From the cluster of Richmond roses at his side, he selected a bud with great discrimination, and thrust it into his buttonhole.

"Sam," he remarked, "I don't think the drawing-room is very pleasant this morning. Bring Miss Vaile in here. And—let me see. Fix things up a little, can't you? That bowl of roses, now. Set it a trifle more to the center of the table. There! And bring that piano scarf and lay it over my leg. It looks like a prostrate tombstone. That's better. Now put the cigars— But then, of course, she wouldn't care for those. Has Miss Gretchen a box of candy anywhere?"

Sam didn't know, suh. Mus' he fill de decanter?

The lieutenant was weighing this latter suggestion when the doorbell rang, and the task of fixing things up was abandoned.

When Elinor Vaile came in a moment later, the irate invalid had been startlingly transformed into the gallant officer. Bowing, with a pleasing mixture of deference and delight, he accepted her proffered hand, and said radiantly:

"My dear Miss Vaile! You see, I am debarred the privilege of rising. I must sit in the presence of my superior."

"Your superior," said Elinor, with that pleasant languor of voice and gesture that made her the embodiment of the cool breeze blowing from the magnolias, "your superior, as you call her, has conspired against all airships. Never shall I look upon them without remembering that a certain *aéroplane* was so unpatriotic as to turn over on Lieutenant Craig."

She sat down on the divan beside him—fair, beautiful, exquisitely gowned in gray. There were those who made extreme surmises as to the age of Elinor Vaile. One woman protested that the owner of those unwaning charms was thirty-eight. There were other guesses ranging as low as thirty. She looked, perhaps, twenty-seven. But, then, one never thought of age in connection with Elinor Vaile. One wondered, perhaps, about the color of her eyes—were they blue or gray or both? Or were they, perhaps, brown? But one never wondered about her age, and the people who tried to enlighten one gratuitously were called cats.

The lieutenant was wondering now about her eyes. Strange, he had known Elinor Vaile as a very little girl, and had never noticed her eyes before! He rather inclined to the opinion that they were gray. At length he said:

"If you have conspired against the airship, I feel that I am avenged for all its treachery."

Her eyes brimmed with laughter, and he decided that they were blue.

"Lieutenant, the blarney stone must have been particularly active when you kissed it."

She unfolded her fan and plied it, still smiling.

"Because," said the lieutenant, "I kissed it with my heart."

"I believe you did. At any rate, I think it very hard that you should have wounded yourself for your country after this fashion, and on one of your rare visits home. I am only thankful that the cowardly vessel took its turn-over ten feet up instead of ten hundred."

The lieutenant bowed.

"Where's Gretchen?" asked the lady. "I wrote her that I would come."

"Gone for a walk," said the lieutenant, as if waving Gretchen, as a topic, to one side. "Or, rather, gone to post a letter."

"The walk was taken because of the letter, you mean?"

The lieutenant nodded.

"She writes one every day."

Elinor closed her fan. Her eyes were grave.

"I suppose Gretchen gives me a very bad name," said the man. "She's got the idea, somehow, that I'm—well, a bit restive."

"Aren't you?" asked Elinor.

"Well——" evaded he.

"Oh, lieutenant! Don't tell me you aren't man enough to roar at your affliction!"

"Well——" admitted the lieutenant.

"I was sure of it! My observation is that the more loudly a man complains when he's sick, the more he's to be trusted when he's well. It's frankness that causes his groans—sincerity, candor."

"I must admit," said the lieutenant modestly, "that Gretchen has had a great deal to put up with."

"Gretchen is young. It's excellent training for her." She paused a moment, looking at her fan. "But Gretchen is old enough," she went on presently, "to give me a great deal of concern. Do you realize that the little girl is eighteen?"

"Her birthday last week was what I came home for," said the man.

Elinor looked at him.

"Just the age her mother was," she said, "when she ran away—and married."

"And so like her!" said the lieutenant softly. "Do you know, Miss Vaile, there are times when I think that I have my little sister back again!"

He looked away, for his eyes stung, but he knew that she must have noticed the tremor in his voice, and finally he faced her frankly, finding in her eyes the same depth of tears that had so burned his own.

"I should like to speak to you," he



"They both think I'm a baby. And if I wait until 'm old, I'll never marry you. Anyhow,"
she finished comfortably, "they'll forgive me."

said, "about what happened so long ago. You and Margaret were close to each other. You were with her at the last. Did she—you must not shrink from hurting me—did she feel that I had been cruel or—needlessly hard? Did she say—anything like that?"

She answered him softly.

"I think in the beginning she may have thought so. She was so like Gretchen—impulsive, willful, sweet. She believed that Arthur was all that a man should be, that your objections to him were foolish and unjust. She had idealized him, and she loved him. Just as Gretchen could idealize. Just as Gretchen could love."

"I know," said the lieutenant.

His hands were gripped together, and he looked down at them. But Elinor knew that he did not know at all.

"I sometimes believe," she said, "that a girl will love any man who comes to her at the right moment and in the right way. The manner of his coming, the time of his coming, these are all that count. At the last, she knew that you had been right. How could she help knowing, after all she had suffered? I know she would have sent for you, as she did for me, if she had known how near the end was. A woman is so needed at times like those. That was why she wrote for me to come. And I know that she felt your forgiveness. I am sure of it. Or would she have sent the baby to you?"

"No," he answered, still looking down at his gripped hands. "No—I've often thought of that. She wouldn't have given me Gretchen—if she hadn't believed."

"The dying understand," said Elinor.

At that he broke forth, striking a clenched hand against the arm of his chair, his words a mere whisper, yet hard as steel:

"If only I could have stopped it in time!"

"What could you have done?" she asked. And then, in answer to his look: "Shot him? Yes. But such measures never solve problems. They merely create new ones. Her mind was set. Her heart was set. We talked

it over many, many times out there under the magnolias. What babies we were, and how she thought she loved him! You were away off at naval school. If your mother had lived—"

"But there was nobody but me," he said.

"And me. What could *we* do against him?" They looked at each other helplessly, and she caught her breath in a little sigh. Then, with a braver tone: "In the meantime, here is Gretchen."

The lieutenant smiled. His eyes grew soft.

"I shall never forget," he said, "the night you brought her to me. It was raining outside, and I was walking up and down in this room. Strangely enough, I was thinking of our father, who had died when we were children. Every one was asleep, except the old housekeeper, Mrs. Fludd. She had been our nurse, you know, and she had scarcely slept since Margaret went away. I could see her light shining out into the rain.

"Then came that long ring at the bell. Every echo in the lonely old house awoke, then trembled into stillness again, and the rain pattered suddenly in the empty court like the feet of spirits fleeing from the house. I went to the door myself and opened it. There you stood, a little slip of a girl, with a bundle in your arms and the rain shining on your hair. I asked you what you wanted, and if you would come in. But you stood there silent, holding your little burden, and looking into my face."

"I think I was a little afraid of you," said the woman.

"So I took your hand—do you remember?—and fairly drew you into the room. And then you laid back a fold of the shawl you wore— And that was the first time I ever saw Gretchen!"

"Ah!" whispered Elinor. "She *was* so tiny!"

"She was the *ti-ni-est* thing I ever saw!" cried the lieutenant.

Elinor smiled.

"You were mortally afraid of her!" she reminded him.

He defended himself.

"I didn't know what she *was*."

"You began to call Mrs. Fludd—rather frantically, I thought, for a brave sailor boy in a uniform. And how tender the dear soul was—even before she knew! And then came the hardest part—the part I had dreaded all the way across the mountains and in the cramped little train that bore us two through the desert, from that far Pacific coast where *she* had died—the *telling* you. Nothing that had been was like that."

"Yes," he answered. "That must have been hard."

"And I wonder," she said, "I wonder if you knew, too, how hard it was to go away again, leaving her with you? During that long journey she had seemed to grow to my heart where I had held her—and if you had refused her—"

"Refused her!" cried the man.

"She would have been all mine."

He shook his head.

"What could a child like you—"

But she interrupted:

"Margaret's trouble had made me a woman." And then, more brightly, and with even a little note of triumph: "But I am her godmother. Don't forget that!"

"That's so!" exclaimed the lieutenant, clapping the arm of his chair. "I was the godfather!" And then, with a worried look: "I wonder if I've neglected anything a godfather ought to do?"

"I fancy not," soothed Elinor. "I don't think a great deal is expected from any sort of father."

"I'm glad to hear that. But seriously, don't you think that Gretchen *grows* fast? I pledge you my word, I hardly know her from time to time." He lowered his voice, glancing toward the court. "I've picked up a little joke on Gretchen. She is trying to look like you! To be you, in fact, in everything she says and does."

He laughed, but the woman did not join him.

"Dear little Gretchen!" she said.

The man laughed on.

"It's about as if a French doll should take on the manners of a siren! Gretchen may perch on a cliff and comb

out her long hair, but she'll never lure sailors to their deaths in your particular way!"

"Lieutenant, what *do* you mean?"

"You don't suppose I haven't heard of the broken hearts that strew your coast—and you sitting serene and unattainable, combing your golden hair!"

"Libels, lieutenant! Base libels!"

"Yes," he gravely admitted. "Somehow I can't think of you as a siren. Somehow I always see you standing on the doorstep, with the rain shining on your hair."

"And I always see you," she answered, "walking back and forth under the magnolias, your chest very large."

"Dear lady," he flung back, "shall I tell you a secret? I knew that you were looking!" And he sighed. "Ah, well! We look back on the past with remorse and regret—remorse for the follies we committed, and regret for the ones we didn't!"

Elinor laughed and rose.

"Lieutenant," she chided, "you are surreptitiously oiling the wheels of time! It is past Gretchen's lunch hour and she hasn't come!"

"She'll be back in good time," he told her. "Well, Sam? What is it?"

"De ca'iage done ready, suh," apologized Sam.

"Now, you must go!" said Elinor. "I know that the doctor has ordered you to take the air."

"At the point of a revolver," admitted the lieutenant. "But the air is so pleasant indoors this morning—"

"No. Gretchen and I have secrets. She'll be here soon."

"And you aren't flying away anywhere—that is, to Europe or California?"

"No, indeed! You must take the air in Grenville Avenue some Thursday."

"Thank you! Next Thursday, if I may?"

And Elinor having expressed her joy in such a prospect, he bowed over her hand, and was rolled out in state by Sam.

Whereupon the light dropped like a veil from the woman's face, and she crossed the room, to take up her station

by the window and gaze off down the street whence Gretchen should return. In this place the ledge of the great fireplace hid her, and Gretchen, tiptoeing through the court and stealing through the glass doors, thought herself alone.

She turned and beckoned into the court. In another second she was joined by a pale youth in white flannels. Straw-colored curls fell below his shoulder, framing a thin, sharp-featured face. His eyes were large, and of a pale, peculiar blue, the exact shade of his flowing Windsor tie. He was about to step into the room, following Gretchen, when suddenly he seized her arm and pointed silently to the window.

"It's Elinor!" whispered the girl. "Go out into the court. She won't stay long."

And she thrust him through the glass doors, closing them softly, and drawing the portières. Then she said, aloud, with the least trace of a tremor in the words:

"How do you do, Elinor?"

The older woman turned quickly, and, coming over to the girl, caught both her hands.

"Ah, Gretchen!" she said. "May I tell you something?"

Gretchen threw an apprehensive half glance toward the court.

"Go ahead!" she groaned.

"You are a love in that hat! Did you get it here?"

Gretchen instantly smiled at her reflection above the escritoire.

"It's a poem," said Elinor. And then: "Perhaps it will prove the inspiration for one—who knows?"

"Have you had lunch?" * asked Gretchen.

The allusion to a poem had brought a strange flush to her cheek.

"I don't eat lunch," said Elinor; "but you may go to yours."

"I've had it," said Gretchen, and then grew suddenly confused. "I mean—You see, I had lunch with a friend. That's what kept me."

Then Elinor looked into her eyes.

"Gretchen," she said softly, "is it true?"

"Is what true?" asked Gretchen, pulling her hands away.

"That the latest is—a poet?"

"What do you mean by 'the latest'? I thought you objected to slang."

"I mean your last attachment, Gretchen. I hear that he writes astounding verse."

"I object to the word 'astounding,' Elinor. And I hope that some day you will meet Mr. Cribble."

"Cribble—Cribble—" mused Elinor. "I used to know some Cribbles." And then cautiously, as if treading very close to the crater's little mouth: "Is—is poetry a very lucrative profession, Gretchen?"

Gretchen lifted her chin.

"Poetry isn't intended to be lucrative."

"Oh!" Elinor spoke with relief. "Then he has some other profession! Poetry is his pastime."

Gretchen's chin had not come down.

"Poetry should never be a pastime," she said.

"But can he *support* you on poetry?"

Gretchen looked her scorn of such minor considerations.

"I have plenty of money," she said.

"That's just it," said Elinor. But she said it to herself.

"Anyhow," Gretchen went on, "he writes by the reams. I never saw anybody work faster. And he's busy now on an ode."

"An ode," mused Elinor aloud. "An ode. How does he spell it, Gretchen?"

"There's only one way to spell ode," muttered the volcano.

"Is there, Gretchen?"

There was a moment's dead silence, then the eruption came.

"You've come here to make fun of me!" cried Gretchen. "To—to badger me! There's no one who understands—though I had hoped *you would*! I meant to tell you as soon as I could speak of it. It's been too—too beautiful—too sacred—to tell anybody! And now some one's been tattling—interfering. How I hate everybody! Anyhow, my life's my own—and I'll make it what I please!"



"She has found this poem," said Otis, "altered it, set it to music, and brought it to-night, knowing that you would be here, meaning to torture you with it—hoping to separate us."

And there were brimstone of fiery glances, and lava of hot tears, and dreadful little rumblings, torn across by sobs.

Elinor laid a hand on the girl's hair. "Gretchen!" she breathed.

"Elinor, you know I love you! I don't believe you mean to hurt me, really, but—I just can't talk about it. It's so—new."

"I understand."

Gretchen uncovered her face and looked up.

"And he's so wonderful, Elinor! I'm not worthy of him. I can't understand why he should choose *me*. And for any one to even think things against him—for you to say things—"

And then Elinor asked very softly:

"When is it to be, Gretchen?"

The girl caught her breath.

"Oh," she said, "I haven't thought of when. I wish it could stay like this—forever."

"Can't it," said Elinor, "for, let us say, a year?"

Gretchen twisted her wet handkerchief.

"I'm afraid not. It's the only point we can't agree on. He wants to marry—right away."

Elinor sat down on the divan, drawing the girl with her.

"When did all this happen, Gretchen?"

"It—it began late in the summer—when we first came back from Wave-wood. Uncle Bobbin and I. Otis proposed in a poem." She glanced sideways at her companion, fearful of banter. "It was beautiful, Elinor. But unless you have the finer feelings——"

Elinor was grave.

"I try to have them. Do you remember the verses?"

Gretchen nodded. Then shyly:

"Shall I say them? I think you'll know him better when you've heard them. I want you to understand. I can't bear it if you don't! And, oh—Elinor, you haven't told Uncle Bobbin?"

"My dear," said Elinor, "I never tell a man anything."

"We're going to tell him," confided Gretchen. "But we've got to go very slowly. In the first place, Uncle Bobbin thinks that I'm *three years old*!"

"Well, how about the poem, Gretchen?"

"And so I want you to like him. I want it awfully. For if *you* like him, you can persuade Uncle Bobbin to like him. You could do worlds by coming here every day and telling Uncle Bobbin how wonderful Otis is. His leg hurts him so he couldn't run away."

"But the poem!"

"Oh, yes!" Gretchen lifted her face, which had grown dreamy. "This is how it happened, Elinor. It was twilight under the magnolias. Everything was in bloom about us. The fountain plashed in the court——"

"And the moon——" prompted Elinor.

"The moon *was* rising! How did you know? And I wore white. Otis loves white."

"And where was Uncle Bobbin?"

Gretchen thrust out a red lip.

"That was the awful part of it! Uncle Bobbin had gone to sleep in the court, and every now and then we could hear him snore. And it was such an *ugly* snore! Such a gruff, threatening snore! I was so disgusted!"

"It appears that Uncle Bobbin also is lacking in the finer feelings," observed Elinor.

"I know it. But after a while I forgot all about him. Otis was kneeling—— Elinor, you won't laugh, will you?"

"My dear child," said Elinor, "I have not the least desire to laugh!"

"Otis was kneeling," went on Gretchen, "and gently—oh, so gently!—he took my hand in his and said:

"The wind, the waves, and the moon,
I have told them a secret divine.
The nightingale sings it o'er and o'er,
The willows whisper it down the shore.
'Be mine! Be mine! Be mine!'

"The wind, the waves, and the moon,
And the stars in the heavens that shine,
They know my love with her dark-brown hair,

They echo the words of my ardent prayer,
'Be mine! Be mine! Be mine!'

Gretchen paused. After a rapt moment, she turned quickly to Elinor, and said:

"I don't see anything *astounding* about *those* verses, do you?"

"No, I really don't," said Elinor.

"And, oh, think!" said Gretchen. "To be the love of a poet! To be what Beatrice was to Dante! What Laura was to Petrarch! Think of being immortalized as well as loved!"

Gretchen's cheeks were like new-blown poppies, her eyes shone.

"But do you remember what Byron said?" asked Elinor.

"Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?"

Gretchen reflected a moment.

"Yes, I think he would," she said finally. "And greater sonnets. And think what life with Petrarch would have meant for Laura!"

Elinor suppressed a sigh.

"And did you say 'yes' at once?" she asked.

"No," answered Gretchen. "It would have been too abrupt. He asked me again in a letter, and I accepted in a letter. I think that's much more refined. I get a letter every day."

"And post a letter every day," said Elinor.

Gretchen nodded.

"And whenever you go to post it—which is just before Uncle Bobbin takes his ride—he meets you and walks home with you, which is right after Uncle Bobbin has ridden forth."

Gretchen nodded again, with a swift side glance at the court.

"Otis—Otis—" murmured Elinor. And then suddenly: "Yes! He's the one!"

"The one what?" cried Gretchen.

"The one I know. Shall I tell you a secret?" She leaned forward, her hand on Gretchen's, a singular smile dwelling in her eyes. "*I have held your lover on my knee!*" she said.

Gretchen was shocked. She withdrew her hand.

"On your—" And then, suddenly illuminated: "When he was little, of course! I can't imagine Otis allowing anything of the sort, unless he was very small."

"I assure you that he was very small. And I lost interest in him after you came. Heigh-ho!" she said, rising. "So it's bound to be, Gretchen?"

Gretchen met her eyes squarely.

"It is," she said.

"And what will you do with Steven?" asked Elinor.

Gretchen's chin went up in record-breaking time.

"Mr. Elrod and I," she announced, "have nothing in common."

"By the way," said Elinor, laughing, "did you see him at the cotillion the other night? He came with Miss Marsh—Beulah Marsh. My dear, the jewels! She was an animated Kimberley. But Steven seemed depressed. Even with all that borrowed radiance, he looked dark. I wonder why? Did Steven understand that you cared a little? I mean—before?"

"I—I don't know," mumbled Gretchen. "He happened to propose to me that afternoon— Oh, you needn't look like that, Elinor! I didn't know he meant to. It's all very well to say that any woman can tell, but I wasn't *watching* him. I can't sit up nights, taking a man's temperature, to see if he's threatened with an attack of proposing matrimony."

"I suppose Steven *isn't* very adroit," mused Elinor.

"He proposed precisely like a cow!" remarked Gretchen.

Elinor repressed a smile.

"And just what is the bovine method?" she inquired.

"Oh, he blundered about, and then he got up all of a sudden and grabbed me in his arms."

"Now I should call that more like a bear," said Elinor.

"Well, it was very different from Otis."

"I imagine so. But I'm sorry for Steven, all the same. Let us hope the diamond queen will console him. By the bye, when am I to see Otis?"

"To-night!" cried Gretchen. "Have you anything on hand?"

"Nothing at all. I shall expect you both."

"Oh, you'll love him, Elinor!" cried the girl. "All the women do. To think of knowing him when he was a— What do you want, Sam?"

For Sam had entered with a card which Elinor appropriated and passed on to Gretchen.

"I won't see Steven Elrod!" said Gretchen. "He knows better than to come here."

And she flung the card on the table, and glared at Sam.

"I fancy he's come to apologize," said Elinor. "Be a good fellow, Gretchen. Never retreat before an apology."

"Very well," agreed the girl resignedly. "Send him in."

"And now I must go," said Elinor, and turned toward the door.

Halfway, however, she was confronted by a good-looking, well-set-up young fellow, who gripped her hand

and gave her a genial glance from gray and steady eyes.

"Well, well, Steven!" she said. "And how is the new State senator?"

"Not very well," said Steven. "My glory is so new that it creaks and makes me conscious." And then he added, very softly, very constrainedly: "How do, Gretchen?"

Gretchen bowed glacially, and he turned quickly to Elinor, rubbing his hands as if chilled to the bone.

"I only got your message——" he began, but Elinor cried out, stopping him:

"Oh, Gretchen! My blue motor veil! I left it in your room the last time I was here. Find it for me—there's a dear!"

As Gretchen silently withdrew, she turned on the boy.

"Steven, what do you mean by mentioning 'my message'?"

"But what——"

"Never mind. When you telephoned me that Gretchen had refused to see you and that you couldn't think why, I thought I might drop down, and be near the throne this morning. So if you chanced to obey my suggestion and call just at this hour——"

"You're a brick!" said Steven.

"Not a bit. But one thing, sir, you neglected to tell me." She shook her head sadly. "About last Tuesday afternoon," she added.

Steven flushed.

"She told you about that, did she?"

"She did. And whatever you do, don't apologize."

"Apologize? But how absurd to apologize for what I'll have to do again—if ever she gives me the chance! What's a man to do, Elinor? There's something about that little girl—— By George, I don't know what gets into me!"

He flung about, gazing at the door by which Gretchen had retired.

"Steven," said Elinor, "couldn't you grow some curls?"

"Curls?" The boy ran his hand over the back of his head, his puzzled eyes searching hers. "I don't know. Perhaps I might."

"It would finish you with me—but they say *he* has them." She put up a quick hand, as if to ward off a question. "I don't know anything about it—except that—she must like curls."

"Oh, but, Elinor!" cried Steven, after a moment. "Not that——" He took down the hand and put it into his pocket. "Good Lord!" he groaned. "If I give Gretchen up, it's got to be to a *man*!"

"Well, what's *he*?" asked Elinor.

"Oh, but those *curls*! He looks like a cross between a billy goat and a seraph! He acts as if his temperament were always hurting him. Besides, he's as good as engaged to that Miss Marsh."

"The diamond queen?" asked Elinor.

"I thought I saw her with you."

"Once. She was assigned to me. Nice girl, of course. But didn't he glare at me like a cat through that jungle of hair? Gretchen marry that—— Oh, but her uncle won't let her! *You* won't let her!"

Steven had both hands in his pockets now, and was pacing the long Dagestan with pantherlike restlessness.

"You don't know what you're talking about," said Elinor. "Marriage, it appears, is about the easiest of all contracts in this country. Gretchen is eighteen."

"Well, then," Steven stopped and faced her, "can't we steer him back to Miss Marsh? You don't think that Gretchen would really care, do you? She wouldn't suffer?"

"It's better for her to suffer now than after a while. But he wouldn't be steered, Steven. Not while there's hope from Gretchen. You see, Gretchen has the most money."

Steven said something under his breath and turned away.

"I think so, too," said Elinor. "I haven't slept for two nights."

"I haven't slept for two years," groaned Steven.

Elinor drew closer to him, and laid her closed fan upon his sleeve.

"There's only one thing that anybody can do," she said, "and that is—stave it off. If we can postpone it long enough, some day she'll see for herself." She

lifted the fan, and, unfurling it, added, with a change of tone: "What are you doing this evening?"

"Nothing," answered Steven. "Why?"

"Gretchen's coming around. You come, too. And while you needn't apologize for last Tuesday, don't repeat the offense, no matter how many chances she gives you. There's one thing that every lover should remember: *Don't blow the flame for the other man.* Promise me, Steven, that you won't. Not one word of love to Gretchen. Not one."

"Not one," promised Steven. "I swear."

When Gretchen came in, Elinor was fanning tranquilly, while Steven stood in the precise center of the Dagestan, his hands in his pockets.

"Did you find the veil, Gretchen?" asked Elinor.

"Veil?" replied Gretchen sweetly. "Why, you didn't really mean me to look for a veil, did you, Elinor? I hope I didn't come back too soon."

"Gretchen, you're awful!" said Elinor, and folded her fan.

Steven laughed slowly and silently. Then Elinor, lifting a finger to him in silent warning, went home, and Gretchen sat down disdainfully on the divan. What *could* poor Otis be doing all this while in the court? If only she might slip out to him before Uncle Bobbin should return!

"Gretchen!" breathed Steven.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Elrod?" asked Gretchen.

But Steven only stood looking at her.

"That sounds funny, Gretchen. Mr. Elrod! You never called me that, even when you were running around here in red socks."

"You recall most extraordinary things," said Gretchen icily.

Then Steven came close to her, and laid his hand on the back of her chair.

"Gretchen," he said, "what has come over you? You used to care—a little. I *know* you cared——" Then suddenly he drew away, remembering his promise to Elinor. "Oh, Gretchen!" he

broke off, with the width of the rug between them.

"You are entirely too impulsive to make a good husband," said Gretchen sagely.

"Give me time!" begged Steven. "That's all I ask of you. You are so young. You are only a child—I mean"—hastily—"in your experience, your knowledge of the world. Wait a year—two years——"

Gretchen covered her face.

"Your voice makes me dizzy," she said. "Go away."

At that he came very close to her.

"Promise me!" he whispered. "Why, little girl, if you deny me my chance, I feel as if my arms must carry you away even against my will. Oh, Gretchen—girl, you are mine! Something made you mine!"

"Don't!" she whispered from behind her hands. "I tell you to—go—away!"

"Then promise me you'll wait! Promise me you'll rule justly! I'll try to be all you want me to be—whatever that is, Gretchen."

She uncovered her face, and her eyes met his.

"Steven," she said softly, "I'll be frank with you. There's something about you that makes me want to—speak sincerely. I used to think—you know every girl has her dreams—I used to think that some day I'd—marry you, Steven. I used to think we'd marry in the little graystone church with the roses around the door. We used to pass it, you remember, on the way to school. And even now, sometimes when I see that little church—— But no. You see, I always felt so—so *safe* with you, Steven—as if nothing in the world could hurt me when you were near—— But lately——"

"Yes—— Lately, Gretchen? Go on!"

"I don't know how to tell you. There's something about you now—and if I let myself—— But love must be a different thing than this. I know now. Something has come into my life that has shown everything to me. I can't marry you, Steven. I love some one else."



"Otis Cribble!" said Steven.

It was as if he had taken the name by the scruff of the neck and flung it at her feet.

"Why, Steven! Don't say it like that! I want you for his friend. I want you for mine." She caught his sleeve, and drew him around until he faced her. "I shouldn't feel like Gretchen," she said, "if I hadn't your friendship."

And as she looked up into his face, Steven bent lower.

She did not move. Her eyes seemed mingled into his.

Lower he bent, and lower. Then silently their lips met. A long moment, and suddenly the girl drew away. She rose, covering her face again and shivering from head to foot.

"What have I done?" she cried. Then, turning on him: "Go away! Oh, tell me what to do!"

"Come to me!" breathed Steven, with open arms.

"You!" she cried. "I will never look at you again! You are my—my evil genius! Go away! Oh, if you really do love me—if you have any respect left for me—go away!" And then she made a frantic oath: "I shall never look upon your face again as long as I live!"

"I don't know *how* it happened," floundered Steven. "Don't be so hard, Gretchen!"

"Are you going?" cried Gretchen.

"Yes!" thundered Steven, and flung himself to the door. There he turned, and, after a moment— "I can't leave you like this," he said.

"You can, because you must," pronounced the girl.

"All right," said the boy, and with a mighty attempt at bravado he went.

She heard the great front door close behind him; then she went quickly and cautiously to the portières that hid the court. The place was empty. She opened the glass doors.

"Otis!" she called.

After a moment, she saw him coming toward her down the avenue of magnolias, the sun shining on his curls. She went to meet him.

"Otis!" she said, as he drew nearer.

"I was afraid that you had gone!" Then quickly: "D-d-did you hear anything?"

"I?" said Otis. "I heard a mocking bird singing in the magnolias. That was all."

"You've been out on the lawn all the while?"

"Yes, my flower," said Otis. "Why do you tremble? Come! Let us sit here by the fountain. Now, tell me—who were your friends? I saw them go away."

"The lady was Elinor. I wanted you to meet her—but you had on these purple shoes—and I knew she couldn't stand that."

"Is Miss Vaile's approval absolutely necessary?" asked Otis.

"Not now—not now!" she answered. Then, turning to him: "Otis, do you really want me?"

"More than life!" said Otis.

"Well, then, *take* me! Take me now!" The man looked at her, his eyes widening. "You don't understand the conditions," she hurried on. "You don't understand how hard it is sometimes to be faithful to you and to my ideals. You'd better take me *now*."

"But Lieutenant Craig," said Otis. "Would he consent to so speedy an arrangement?"

"Of course not! Nobody will. We've got to do it without anybody's consent. We haven't got time to get consents. I don't—I don't trust myself any more."

"My white flower!"

"Don't call me that! I'm black as a beetle!"

"Still, it would not be wise—" he hesitated.

"To offend Uncle Bobbin!" she supplied. "Sometimes I believe it would break his heart. But we can't consider all his little whims. He's about forty, and he's getting childish."

Otis spoke meditatively.

"I think you said that he has no other relative?"

"I'm the only one." The girl's voice quavered. "He told me that at Santiago, when the shells were flying, he kept seeing my face. And he's never loved any one else—nor thought of marry-

ing. And then there's Elinor; she's been like my own mother. But they both think I'm a baby. And if I wait until I'm old, I'll never marry you. Anyhow," she finished comfortably, "they'll forgive me."

"Are you sure that Lieutenant Craig will—"

"Oh, yes. Uncle Bobbin said that the only regret he had in life was forgiving too late." She turned on him. "Why do you worry so over Uncle Bobbin? Why don't you think of me? If you only knew all that I'm fighting for your sake!"

"My white flower!" breathed Otis. "It is of you that I am thinking. It would be very hard for you if your uncle should, as it were, cut you off. I am poor, and I should never forgive my impetuosity in bringing you to share my lot. Would that I had all the riches of the world to offer you!"

He sighed deeply, and gazed into the fountain.

"He can't cut me off," said Gretchen. "I have my own property—as much as he has himself. He made it over to me when I was eighteen."

The man caught her hand and kissed it in a sort of ecstasy.

"Even if we were poor," he murmured, gazing into her eyes, "what would that matter? Have I not taught you that love is the real wealth? Let me take you now—now—and keep you!"

"Well, that's what I've been *telling* you!" cried Gretchen. "I need you! I need you—to stand between me and—myself."

Otis rose.

"I did not understand." He took both her hands. "Let us go now, my white flower. Listen! There is a little church at the end of this street—I passed it on my way. A little gray-stone church, with roses growing by the door—"

"Oh, not there!" cried Gretchen. She wrenched her hands away. "Besides—besides," she explained, "I have to pack my things. And you"—she was thinking quickly—"you have to make arrangements about the trip—and

all. We will take a trip, won't we? A long trip—and not come back—till—till I've forgotten everything!"

"A trip?" said Otis dubiously. "I suppose so."

"I'll go by the bank, then," said Gretchen, "and get some money. Trips cost a lot, I know, and"—she hesitated—"and poetry isn't a very *lucrative* profession. Besides, poetry money should only be spent for wonderful things like flowers—and charlotte russe. And you'll have to pack, too. Then—then—" A happy thought greeted her. "I tell you!" she cried. "We'll leave from Elinor's! I forgot to tell you—but she asked me to bring you there to-night. You be there at nine sharp, and after we've stayed a little while, we'll just go away quietly, and no one will think anything or bother us with questions. I'll have the car wait outside, and you'll have the tickets— Oh, yes!—and the license and the minister. But not at this *little* church—not there!"

"I will attend to all!" breathed Otis. And, kissing her right hand, he murmured: "My white flower!" And, kissing her left, where the ring should be, he said: "My bride!" Then, smoothing the dark curls away, he kissed her brow.

Gretchen drew away.

"I suppose," she said, a frightened look dawning in her eyes, "I suppose it's a very solemn thing—getting married. They'll be dreadfully hurt—" She turned to him again, the frightened look growing into something like appeal: "But it's right that I should love you, and be true to you, isn't it?"

"Indeed, yes!" breathed Otis.

"I gave you my word because you awoke all that was best in me. And since I have given you my word—"

"You hold it sacred! Even so, my beautiful!"

"Good-by!" she said quickly. "I hear Uncle Bobbin. Go down the driveway."

Again he kissed her hand, and she watched him go beneath the magnolias, carrying his wide-brimmed hat, the sun shining on his curls.

"It's the only way!" said Gretchen. "The only way!"

And, lifting her little chin, she went into the house.

When Gretchen arrived in Grenville Avenue that night, she wore, over her light dress, a long, hooded cloak that reached to her shoes. This she removed before entering, and gave into the charge of Ffine, the maid, lest Elinor should remark on a such complete unwrapping during such mild weather.

"What time is it?" she asked, rather breathlessly.

"The clock, madame, has just struck nine. Miss Vaile is dressing. She asked me to say that she would be in presently."

Ffine retired, carrying the long cloak. "Must be making a peach of a toilet," commented Gretchen, and sat down on the big Chesterfield.

The drawing-room was but dimly lit by a mellow-shaded lamp and the hidden sconces that illumined a great painting of early-autumn woods, a wonderful thing by some unknown artist, which Elinor had picked up abroad. It was like glorified moonlight, this soft, golden glow falling on the burnished hangings, the bits of delicate bric-a-brac, and rare old rugs.

"Wonder whom Elinor's expecting?" thought Gretchen. "This is the light she arranges to make her impressions by."

And then she forgot Elinor and the room, and fell to worrying about her own affairs. Then Otis appeared, in all the regalia of a white dress suit, his curls groomed to a nicety.

"You got them?" whispered Gretchen.

"Everything is ready," he answered. "Our train starts at eleven. We must leave here at ten. There's a parsonage near by, a minister waiting. We will drive from there to the train. When the clock strikes ten—attend, now!—when the clock strikes ten, I will arise and go out. Ten minutes later you will follow. I shall be waiting outside."

"Now I feel strong!" breathed Gretchen. "Now I feel safe!"

At that moment the portières closing upon the hall parted softly, and Elinor came in. Her red-gold hair was bound with emeralds. She wore a gown of twilight-colored, star-strewn lace over shimmering green.

Smiling a greeting to Gretchen, she moved toward Otis, extending a white and gracious hand.

"So this is Mr. Cribble!" she said.

Her presence, resplendent and unaware, stirred Gretchen with a sick sense of remorse. She moved apart to the piano, and stood nervously toying with the music there.

"And yet my life is my own!" she told herself. "My life is my own!"

And presently she lifted her rebellious little chin. Otis and Elinor were sitting on the Chesterfield.

"You have altered," Elinor was saying, "since I saw you last."

"Since——" Otis was looking rather puzzled. He bowed. "Surely if I had ever met Miss Vaile I could not have forgotten it."

Even in her disturbed state, Gretchen felt a thrill of pride at this speech. Otis always knew the proper thing to say.

"Let us see," said Elinor, "if you remember it."

Was she really going to tell him when it was? How unlike Elinor to give herself away like that! Otis was groping through the dim, blue caverns of his poet mind.

"Was it——" He looked quite lost.

"It was on a Monday morning," she assisted him. "I recall that you pulled my hair."

"My dear Miss Vaile!"

Otis was overcome.

"I can feel it now," she said, shaking that burnished, exquisite coiffure. "But you said the most brilliant things!"

Gretchen's regret at Elinor's lack of pride in making disclosures as to age had passed into an indignant wish that Otis should not be tantalized in such fashion. Look at him now, holding his delicate palms together in a way he had when he was pleased, and saying, with his slow smile: "Indeed?"

Elinor was awful. But at last she said:

"You had on, Mr. Cribble, a white frock with blue ribbons. You had just had your bath!"

At that, Otis' hands dropped helplessly to his knees.

"Is it possible?" he said slowly.

And now that his agony was done, Gretchen fell to watching the hands of the great clock beside him, and to counting the toiling minutes as they passed. It was plain that Elinor liked Otis. If only Steven could be trusted to keep away, things might work out smoothly and happily. But Steven could not be trusted. Nor could she trust herself. There was no other way than this.

"You were really a most wonderful baby," Elinor was saying. "The shape of your head— By the way, have you a volume of your poems?"

"My early poems," said Otis, who seemed to be recovering from his recent shock. "I am now writing a poetic drama, 'The Sex of a Soul.'"

"Has any one been permitted to see it?" Elinor spoke softly.

"No one," said Otis.

Elinor looked toward Gretchen, who had turned from them, and was gazing through the open window into the night.

"She will be the first," she whispered. "Then—may I?"

Otis leaned toward her.

"Would you?" he breathed. And, then, glancing also toward Gretchen: "To speak from my heart, I do not feel that *she* will ever really understand."

Elinor looked up quickly.

"You feel," she answered, "that it has been—a mistake?"

"Not that. A poet," explained he, "should choose his wife from lower clay. She should be, indeed, a weight to keep his feet upon the earth."

Elinor answered softly:

"But it should be the earth upon the mountaintops amid the eternal snows."

He weighed this.

"You do not believe in marriage for the poet?"

"I think he *is* married—already," she replied.

And then, according to his promise, Steven Elrod arrived. But he brought with him a singularly lank young lady,

with straw-colored hair, a top-heavy, lavender-plumed hat, long, glittering ear dangles, and a diamond lavalier that struck the beholder with semiblindness. Perhaps this was just as well, for the remainder of her toilet was engaged in such modern frankness of revelation as to have made clear vision, in this instance, almost painful.

"Miss Marsh," introduced Steven, his eyes on Gretchen.

But Elinor had already taken the newcomer's hand, and was saying, with no trace of the surprise that she must have felt:

"How lovely! You know Miss Love—and Mr. Cribble?"

Gretchen bowed. She had not gone entirely through the window on their arrival, but a farther move would have precipitated her upon the sill. She now turned her back on the world in general.

"Oh, yes!" cried Beulah, with her high laugh. "I know Gretchen! And, oh, Mr. Cribble! How wonderful that you should be here!"

Otis bowed. He seemed, however, to regard the occasion as anything but auspicious. Miss Marsh waved toward him a rolled white paper that she carried.

"See!" she cried. "I have just finished correcting the proof of our song. You know, Miss Vaile, I have composed the music to one of his poems, and this—this is the child of our wedded genius!"

"May I see it?" asked Otis, in a queer voice.

She gave it to him. He unrolled the manuscript, looked it over, and when she had turned away, put it in his pocket.

"I wonder," said Elinor, "if we wouldn't all like something cold." She touched the bell. "Claret cup, Fifine, and a bit of cake."

"Beautiful!" cried Beulah. "With lots of sugar in mine! How nice, Miss Vaile, to be here at one of your little evenings! I hear that your *conversations* are so well managed that one can't help saying brilliant things when



"Thank you, Gretchen!" she cried. "I should have had to ring the bell." She came in and turned to close the door again.

one joins them. Don't they ever get heavy?"

"Sometimes," answered Elinor.

One could almost have fancied that the simple phrase was freighted with strange meaning. But Beulah turned, clapping her sparkling hands.

"The claret cup!" she cried, and crowded her own glass with extra sugar.

"Steven," said Elinor, "take one over to Gretchen, will you?"

Steven arose with alacrity. Several times he had essayed to cross the room, but there had been something distinctly formidable about Gretchen's back. She was sitting down now, digging into the music rack. Steven approached her cautiously, extending a plate and a glass.

"Thank you," said Gretchen, regarding the offering distantly. "I don't drink claret."

"I say, Gretchen," mumbled Steven, "I've written you a long letter. Will you read it if I mail it to you?"

"No," said Gretchen sternly.

"May I sit down?" asked Steven, looking at the vacant chair beside her.

"Certainly," said Gretchen. "I don't undertake to control your attitudes."

Steven placed the rejected dishes on the music rack and sat down.

"This business," he remarked, "is simply laying me out. Let me see you alone, Gretchen. I'll be perfectly calm and reasonable. I swear. Let me!"

Out of the murmur of voices across the room, the high, tremulous tones of Beulah Marsh became distinctly audible.

"Oh, Mr. Elrod! You forgot your cake!"

And in another minute she had brought it to him, smiling into his face.

Steven gallantly refrained from choking her.

Then Elinor spoke:

"Won't you sing for us, Miss Marsh?"

"Yes, *do*!" urged Steven.

But Beulah waved a dramatic hand toward Otis.

"You ask the magpie to proclaim," she cried, "while in your presence sits the nightingale!"

"Very well," said Elinor. "Sing for us first, and then perhaps Mr. Cribble will read to us from his drama."

"Good Lord!" breathed Steven.

Beulah was moving toward the piano.

"I have no song," she said, "except the one Mr. Cribble wrote for me. It is called, 'To My Lady.' I am sure I shall have to leave you to guess who his 'lady' is."

She looked about for the manuscript.

"Mr. Cribble put his lady in his vest pocket," said Steven. "I saw him."

"Oh, did he keep it?" cried Beulah. "But I know it by heart." She turned to Otis. "You may as well give it to me. Don't be so modest!"

And she laughed, holding out her hand for the song.

Otis spoke to her quickly, and under his breath.

"Really," he said, "I would not sing it here. They would not understand."

Gretchen had turned in her chair, and was watching them both. She could not hear what Otis said, but Beulah's next words were high-pitched, and fraught with a certain impatience.

"It's all I have to sing!" she announced. "Besides, it's mine! You wrote it to me!"

"We are all waiting, Mr. Cribble," said Elinor.

And Otis, perforce, surrendered the song, and sat down, looking very much disturbed.

Beulah took her seat at the piano. She stopped, her fingers on the keys, and smiled across at Steven.

"Mr. Elrod," she cooed, "will you come and turn the music for me?"

Steven's face grew purple. He swallowed what appeared to be a haystack, and went to her side. There he stared belligerently at the music, which he repeatedly failed to turn until bidden by a nod of the singer's head. Otis, his tongue in his cheek, gazed at the ceiling.

And in a high, tremulous soprano, with many coy turnings of her head, Beulah sang:

"The wind, the waves, and the moon——"

Gretchen looked up.

"I have told them a secret divine!"

Elinor looked at Gretchen. Then she dropped her eyes.

"The nightingale sings it o'er and o'er,
The willows whisper it down the shore——"

Gretchen arose and looked across at Otis. His eyes probed the ceiling. She turned to the window and stood there, her back to the room.

"Be mine! Be mine! Be mine!"

The singer nodded her head. Steven started, and turned the page.

"The wind, the waves, and the moon,
And the stars in the heaven that shine,
They know my love with her golden hair——"

A shiver ran down Gretchen's back. She half turned from the window, but thought better of it.

"They echo the words of my ardent prayer.
'Be mine! Be mine! Be mine!'"

Elinor's voice came clear and smooth upon the final chord:

"Thank you, Miss Marsh. I know Mr. Cribble must be gratified."

Otis did not delay to verify this. He was crossing the room to Gretchen.

"Won't you play something for us, Miss Marsh?" asked Elinor.

Beulah readily acquiesced, and trailed out a languid melody. Steven had bolted for his seat by the music rack, but, seeing Otis before him, sat down miserably on the Chesterfield.

"Don't you adore mix-ups?" whispered Elinor beside him.

"I'm hanged," said Steven, "if I know how all this happened."

"Don't you?" said Elinor sweetly.

"Well, you said Gretchen was coming, and I—I thought that would be all. So I brought somebody for *you* to talk to."

"Kind of you, Steven!"

"I didn't know you'd provided yourself with a partner."

He glared at Cribble.

"You can always trust me," said Elinor, "to provide myself with what I'll need."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" said Steven. And he looked it.

In the meantime, Gretchen was replying coldly to Otis' frenzied explanation.

"But how did she *get* it?"

"I don't know!" answered Otis. "As soon as I opened the paper, I said: 'She has those sacred lines!' I was overcome by the sacrilege."

Gretchen tightened her lips.

"I could scratch her!" she said.

"She has found this poem," said Otis, "altered it, set it to music, and brought it to-night, knowing that you would be here, meaning to torture you with it—hoping to separate us."

"I'm not tortured," said Gretchen, with lifted chin. "If she found it and altered the words, you are not to blame."

He laid a hand on hers.

"You do understand," he breathed. "You always understand."

The trailing melody died. Miss Marsh turned from the piano.

"Gretchen," said Elinor, "Steven wants to see the new picture, the one in the library."

"It's hanging on the wall," said Gretchen.

"Go with him!" whispered Otis. "Don't let them suspect."

Gretchen gave him a desperate look. Oh, if Otis understood, he would not bid her go! But she turned obediently, and passed from the room, followed by Steven. Beulah's fingers trailed into another air.

"Mr. Cribble," said Elinor, "you didn't eat your cake!"

Otis sat down beside her.

"I cannot eat cake," he said tragically. "I can only look at you."

She smiled forbearingly.

"How thin you'd grow," she said, "if we lived in the same neighborhood."

He leaned toward her.

"But how willingly I'd starve," he gave back, "to be often near you!"

"You are leaving town, then?" asked Elinor.

"No. Oh, no," quickly.

"But I am always at home on Thursdays—to my friends!"

"To *all* your friends," answered Otis. "But I—" He drew back, hesitating. "I am taking a liberty, perhaps," he said.

Elinor smiled, with a bright inclining of the head.

"We will call it a poetic license," she replied.

"Thank you," said Otis. "I was about to add that I should want a day all my own."

Her eyebrows lifted slowly.

"Our friendship appears to be making wonderful strides," she observed.

"I implore your pardon!" Otis was dismayed.

She melted into a sudden smile.

"And what day shall we say?" she answered.

"You are too kind!" he breathed.

"Let us say Monday," she suggested.

Otis put a dazed hand to his head.

"You affect one like wine!" he answered.

"Perhaps it was the claret cup. I think it was a bit strong."

He waved the diagnosis aside.

"I had an uncle," he told her, "who said to me: 'Otis, you are a man who will shun the clever women and trifle with the pretty ones. But some day you will meet a woman both clever and beautiful. She is your doom.'"

"Am I to be shunned," said Elinor softly, "or—trifled with?"

He spoke in a whisper, leaning toward her:

"You are *that woman!*"

And then, as if the words had held a potent charm, the great clock at his side began the stroke of ten. Gretchen came to the door from the library. Her face was pale, and she was followed at once by Steven, whose pleading tones sounded even above the music.

"But hear me out, Gretchen," he was saying. "Hear me *out!*"

Gretchen shrank from him, her eyes on Otis. But the object of this gaze heard neither the voice of Steven nor the striking of the clock. He was looking at Elinor, and Elinor was talking softly. Neither of them saw the pair in the door. Gretchen burst into the room.

"Ring for my wraps, please," she said to Elinor. "I'm going home." And then, as Elinor rose: "Mr. Cribble may finish his call. I'll go alone."

Otis rose, bewildered.

"It's so early, dear," said Elinor, and touched the bell.

Beulah wheeled blithely from the piano.

"It's time we should all go," she piped, and, Fifine entering with the wraps, she snuggled into hers. "Mr. Elrod," she asked, "are you ready?"

Steven cast a desperate look at Gretchen.

"Good night, Elinor," he said.

And they went, Elinor following them into the hall.

"I must see you," whispered Otis to Gretchen, "and explain."

"You *forgot!*" breathed the girl.

"Never! We were talking of you. Besides, we still have time. We'll start

at once—together. Say that I am taking you home."

And so, when Elinor returned, Gretchen remarked rather hurriedly:

"Otis will go with me, after all—to see me home."

"Miss Love is not very well," appended Otis.

"Gretchen not well?"

Elinor's eyes traveled to the girl's.

"I—I have neuralgia," explained Gretchen, a hand pressed to her temple. "I've had it all the evening."

"But, dear, if you have neuralgia, you mustn't go at all. You must stay here with me. Mr. Cribble, I appeal to your better judgment. Is it the wiser thing to go out in the night with a headache, or to stay here in a comfortable bed?"

But, as Otis hesitated, Gretchen answered:

"No matter what he says, and no matter what you say, Elinor, I'm going." Then quickly, lest she might have said too much: "Uncle Bobbin is expecting me."

"I'll go," said Elinor, "and telephone Uncle Bobbin. Mr. Cribble, I leave you to reason with her."

And Elinor departed through the library to the telephone.

"Now!" cried Gretchen, darting toward the hall. "Come on! Quick!"

But Otis had not moved.

"She knows something," he said stolidly. "Wait!"

"Wait?" cried Gretchen. "No!"

"But don't you see," whispered the man, "she will act on her suspicions and follow us? Wait!"

Gretchen thought quickly.

"Is there another train to-night?"

"At three in the morning."

"We'll take that. Leave here now. Take my car, go to your minister, and tell him to be ready. Then come back and wait in the car till I come. Listen! Wait in front—not by the gate, she might see you from her window—but away over by the driveway under the trees. Put out the lights while you wait, and as soon as you come, blow the horn, so I'll know. But blow it low."

"But can you get out?" worried Otis. "I *will* get out. She can't sit up all night."

So when Elinor returned to announce Uncle Bobbin's consent to his niece's remaining, Gretchen answered meekly, and with dropped eyes:

"All right."

And Otis said at once:

"I'll go, then. Good night."

It looked like a very simply effected triumph, and Elinor, alone with Gretchen, laid caressing hands on the girl's dark hair, and breathed softly:

"Poor head! I wish I had something for it!"

Then Fifi came in, locked the doors, made the room tidy, and Gretchen said, still with dropped eyes:

"I think I'll go to bed."

To this Elinor agreed at once that it would probably be the best thing, and led the way to the little room where Gretchen always slept when she came, with everything just as she had left it the last time. And in this room, over the mantel, there hung, in a gold oval frame, the picture of a girl very like Gretchen, except that the dark hair was done in the simple fashion of twenty years ago, and the dark eyes that followed one about so softly were perhaps a bit more meek, the chin a little less rebellious.

As Elinor kissed Gretchen good night, her eyes moved upward to the portrait.

"Dear little girl!" she said. "Sleep sweetly!"

And whether she spoke to Gretchen or the girl in the picture, who shall say?

Suddenly Gretchen's soft arms went around her, and Gretchen answered brokenly:

"Good night, dear—Elinor!"

"Is it only a—headache, Gretchen?" asked the older woman softly.

There was no answer. Gretchen's head was on her shoulder, and Gretchen's young breast stirred quickly against hers.

"Have you something to tell me, Gretchen?"

From the street outside came low and

long the note of an auto horn. Gretchen straightened in her arms.

"Something— Why, no, Elinor! What made you think so? I'm—I'm just tired."

And, moving to the dressing table, she began to let down her hair.

"Good night, then," said Elinor, after a moment. "Don't get up in the morning."

And, closing the door softly behind her, she went out.

Gretchen listened sharply. When the house had quieted to the last footfall, she, too, would go out. And she began to do up again her loosened hair. She took the long cloak from the bed, and wrapped it about her, drawing its hood over her hair. Then she moved to the open window, and stood waiting. And the soft eyes of the portrait followed her every movement, wistful and deep; followed her as she crossed the dim room at last, and, in the utter stillness of the house, stole into the hall. Then the door closed, and the eyes of the portrait gazed on into the dark.

Gretchen stole haltingly along the hall. At Elinor's door she paused and held her breath. Stillness, utter and profound. Swiftly she sped down the carpeted stair, and in another second her hand turned the knob of the front door.

She opened it, and drew quickly back. Elinor was coming up the front step, a white scarf thrown over her hair.

"Thank you, Gretchen!" she cried. "I should have had to ring the bell." She came in and turned to close the door again. She seemed not to have noticed Gretchen's long cloak. "The funniest thing has happened," she said, laying off her scarf, and smiling into Gretchen's eyes. "I kept hearing an auto horn, and the puzzling part of it was that it seemed to come from my own drive. I looked out time and again, but could see no car. Then at last I discerned away over among the trees the outline of a limousine with no lights at all! What do you think of that?"

Gretchen hardly knew what to think. She had loosened her cloak, and it fell,



now, about her feet. Still Elinor seemed not to see.

"I knew Fifiue and the chauffeur were fast asleep, so I took things in my own hands, and went down to investigate. And *still*, Gretchen, they won't let us women vote! Well, my dear, there was *your* automobile! Arnold on the front seat as large as life! He got out as soon as I appeared, and said to me: 'I brought both your bags!' Bags, Gretchen! And I always thought he was the most intelligent servant I ever knew! 'Arnold!' I said. 'What does this mean?' He started back at my voice as if I'd shot him. 'Didn't you understand Miss Love was to stay all night?' I asked.

"What did he say?"

Gretchen's voice was faint, her face very white.

"I was told to come back and wait for her." That's what he said. 'Who told you that?' I demanded. 'Mr. Cribble, ma'am. He's inside.' And, Gretchen, he *was* inside—asleep!"

"Asleep!" gasped Gretchen

"Must have been woozy, don't you think? 'Arnold,' I said, 'take this man home and put him to bed—gently.' Gently, Gretchen! And now, since I have defended my property like a man, let's go back to bed."

She turned toward the stairway, but Gretchen stood in her path with flaming eyes.

"So, you," she said, "you sent my car away?"

"Why, yes, dear!" answered Elinor, quite blankly. "Wasn't that right?"

"Certainly not. How do you know what my orders may have been?"

"Why, Gretchen! Oh, I am sorry! But he'll be back in the morning. Won't that be time enough?"

"It will." Gretchen snatched up her long cloak. "And if he doesn't, there are taxicabs and street cars in this town. Remember that!"

And with the last words fairly flung from her, she fled up the stair, banging her door with a reverberation that echoed throughout the house.

Elinor stood a long moment where the girl had left her, a look of triumph,

tenderness, and strange sorrow shining in her eyes. Then she, too, went slowly up the stair.

And then there came an afternoon, one month later, when, outside, all the land lay gray beneath a drizzling rain. But, inside, with shades drawn, and soft candles lit, Elinor in a sea-green gown was arranging yellow roses in a golden bowl.

It was a Monday afternoon, as it happened, and always, during the past month, the shades had been drawn upon that day, and the candles lit, whether it rained or not. And always on that day a light-curved individual in soft hat and a flowing Windsor tie had come up the walk and rung the front doorbell—whether it rained or not. And he had been admitted, too—without a word.

"Fifiue," said Elinor, as she arranged the roses, "did you telephone this morning?"

"Yes, madame," said Fifiue. "Miss Gretchen is much better. She is sitting up to-day, and has asked for you twice, the nurse said."

"But you told her——"

"I reminded her that it was Monday afternoon, and that a certain caller always——"

"Quite right. And there he is. Go to the door, Fifiue."

But when Fifiue came back, she brought the card of Lieutenant Craig.

"Show him in," said Elinor, giving a final twist to the roses. Fifiue looked at her. "I know. But when the Monday specialty arrives, you can tell me."

So Fifiue, who knew that complications in callers were the last thing that her mistress desired, went out again; and presently in came the lieutenant, restored to his military gait and in the best of spirits.

"Hail, dear lieutenant!" said the lady. "Aren't these lovely?"

She waved a hand at the roses.

"Yellow!" he cried. "On my soul, I ordered violets!"

"And did you put in the box," asked Elinor, "a pink note saying: 'These flowers——' Where is it? Ah, here! 'These flowers, whose tint is the tint

of the sunset and the fallen leaf and the faded grass, let them speak from me to thee, beloved, of the end that is soon to come upon us?"

"Emphatically, I did not," said the lieutenant. "And if you want my opinion—"

"But I don't," said Elinor. "I was merely asking if you wrote it. Are you declining my hand because of a bit of moisture?"

"Pardon!" cried he, having been too perturbed to see her hand. And he took it, contritely and with alacrity, in both of his. "But since we are on the subject," he remarked, "how many times during the past month has my hand been declined?"

"I can't tell," she answered, "not knowing to how many ladies you have offered it." Then, as he still held the hand, she added: "Lieutenant, these very young roses are laughing at us."

He released the prisoned fingers just as Fifi came in with a florist's box.

"My violets!" cried Elinor.

And, lifting them out, she pinned them at her belt. But the lieutenant looked thoughtfully at the roses.

"So Gretchen's up again?" said Elinor.

"Won't be about for a week, though," he answered. "Nervous strain, the doctor says. No excitement for a while."

"We're going away, Gretchen and I," said Elinor. "I feel to blame in a way for her illness—"

"You?" cried the lieutenant.

"She was taken sick here, and I let her go home next day. I ought to have made her stay—but she was so set. So I am going to take her away and give her the best time she ever had in all her wicked little life."

"I told her your plans," said the man. "I think she takes to the idea, for today when I came away I found her packing all her little jimeracks and folders. I think she means to go."

Elinor looked suddenly thoughtful.

"No one sees Gretchen?" she asked.

"No one at all," said the lieutenant. "That young—what's his name? He writes what he calls poetry. Scribble?"

"Cribble?" said Elinor.

"Cribble. That young Cribble has come to the front door several times, and sent innumerable notes, probably in poetry. Steven has called, too. Fine young chap, Steven. And, do you know, I'm thinking it will soon be time for Gretchen to think of getting married? Has that ever occurred to you? I mean to throw her with Steven a little. Just as well to let her see something of the desirable young men before she has time to fall in love with the wrong one."

"Lieutenant, you're a wonder!"

"Oh, I can see a thing or two," admitted the lieutenant. "But I don't think Gretchen likes Steven. Whenever his notes come—the nurse noticed it, too—she gets upset. She *will* read them—I told her not to—but she gets upset. I don't know why. He's a very promising young chap. And another thing I don't understand." The lieutenant straightened in his chair, and looked penetratingly at Elinor. "Why have I hitherto been denied admission on Monday afternoons?"

Elinor smiled.

"Have you yet to learn that Monday with women is a busy day?" she asked.

"Mysteriously busy?" probed the lieutenant.

"As for the mystery," she parried. "my life has been running along for quite a little time. When we begin a book suddenly in the middle, we can't expect to understand all at once."

"My dear friend," he answered softly, "if I may not turn back to the beginning, at least you will permit that I read it to the end?"

She shook her head.

"Have you the patience, lieutenant? Without peeping back at the first chapters, now and then?"

"Won't you understand?" he entreated her. "Can't you see that I love you, Elinor? If you close the book to me now, you close also all the windows that let in the light. What has kept us apart? Always we were close to each other, yet I didn't see—I didn't know. Always I was groping for you without understanding. Elinor, look at me!" Then, as she turned farther from him,

he added quickly: "Don't answer me now. Wait. I will be patient."

"Wait?" she echoed, and turned her face to him, her eyes filled with light. "Oh, we are so old already—and if we wait——"

She laughed—softly, joyously—and he caught her in his arms.

"We won't wait!" he told her. "Not a day! Ah, when I look down into your eyes I see all the lost years!"

"They are not lost," she whispered. "They are in my heart, and I will give them to you."

"I love you!" he said. "I understand you now. I trust you!"

Her eyes deepened.

"That is the best of all," she whispered. "You trust me."

"Absolutely. Through all things."

And he drew her close, close, as if he would never let her go.

It was this instant that Ffine chose to admit Steven Elrod. Very softly, as was Ffine's wont in all things, she opened the drawing-room door, and Steven received the full benefit of the scene therein, and was an astonished audience to the lieutenant's avowal of undying faith. The actors in the little drama, however, were too engrossed to see him, and before Ffine had recovered from her own surprise, Steven had reached beyond her and closed the door as silently as it had been opened.

"Elinor," said the lieutenant, "is your own trust equal to mine?"

"I can do more than trust," said Elinor. "I can forgive if my trust is betrayed."

"You shall never have cause——"

But Elinor had withdrawn from his embrace, and he himself had cut short his remark to pick up hastily a volume of Rochefoucauld's maxims and enter upon a profound scrutiny of the first page. A terrible thump had shaken the door beside them, and now, after a silent two minutes, it slowly opened, and Steven, very flushed of face, remarked:

"Good evening. Elinor, wish you'd see, please, that your floors aren't so highly polished. Or else take that rug away from the door. I usually slide

into the room on it, but to-day the door was shut, and I bumped into it."

"Sit down," said Elinor, "and I'll give you some tea."

Steven turned to Lieutenant Craig.

"I saw your car outside, sir, and thought if I came up you'd tell me how Gretchen is to-day."

The lieutenant laid down the maxims of Rochefoucauld, and was about to deliver a careful statement of Gretchen's condition, incorporating therein a denunciation of the note-writing habit as displayed by certain young gentlemen of the present day, when Ffine, entering with the tea tray, announced that Lieutenant Craig's butler had arrived with a note.

"What?" said the lieutenant. "Sam? A note for me?"

No, explained Ffine. It was a note for Miss Vaile. Nor would he send it in by any one.

So Sam was admitted with the note, and Elinor, reading it rapidly, rose with a very white face.

"Where was Miss Gretchen," she asked, "when she wrote this?"

Sam replied casually and pleasantly that she "were jest a-leavin' home."

"Did you see which way she went?" asked Elinor.

Sam *believed* that she had gone "in de automobile."

"Did she go north, south—west?" cried Elinor. "Which way did she go?"

By this time the men were agitated beyond their control.

"Not worse, is she?" cried Steven, while the lieutenant cried, "What is it?" three times in rapid succession.

Elinor thrust the note into Steven's hand, and began to walk up and down, striking her hands together.

"Let me think! Let me think!" she cried, with a bewilderment of manner quite unlike her usual serene poise.

Steven read only the first line, written in Gretchen's round, sturdy little hand:

"When you get this, Elinor, dear, I shall be married and gone. Otis and I——"

There he stopped, for the room got swimming black, and he couldn't see. The lieutenant took the letter himself.

"Married!" he cried. "Otis? Otis who?"

"Cribble!" said Elinor, walking up and down.

By this time the room had settled down around Steven, and he grabbed Sam's coat.

"Which way'd she go?" he demanded violently. "Think! You've got to think!"

Sam shook his white head, smiling. His teeth chattered audibly. He had had no idea that he was bringing a bomb.

"You good-for-nothing black rascal!" yelled the lieutenant. "Is there any possible reason for your existence? And the letter doesn't say! The letter doesn't say! I'll not believe it! Where's my hat? She wouldn't do it. It's a joke some cowardly rascal— If I ever get hold of the perpetrator of this outrage— Where's my hat?"

"I'll find her," said Steven, "if she's on earth!" And, releasing the chattering Sam, he made for the door.

"Steven," called Elinor, "where are you going?"

"I'm going to find *her*," said Steven. "There are a hundred churches in this town," she answered. "Have you time to search them all?"

"Where's my hat?" asked the lieutenant.

"I can't sit here," said Steven.

Elinor laid a hand on the boy's arm. "You shall find her," she said, "if there's any way on earth. Stay with me one minute. Here's your hat, lieutenant. Hurry!"

"Thanks! I'll be back shortly. Steven, are you coming?"

"Not with you," Elinor replied. "You must divide your forces."

"Quite so. Preposterous! Cribble! My little girl!" And the lieutenant rushed out, followed by Sam.

"Quick, Elinor! Where is she?" cried Steven.

"Just a minute. You must stay here with me. Wait, now! Listen! This is Monday afternoon. Every Monday afternoon, at six o'clock, he comes to me. He will come to-day."

"But six," cried the boy, "may be the

very hour she set— Why, even now —" She gripped his sleeve as he bolted for the door. "What do you mean, Elinor? Am I to sit here and wait for that chump to pay his weekly call?"

Elinor turned quickly to the door, and locked it, drawing out the key. The other door led into the library, from which there was no egress. They were on the second floor, and windows as quick exits were out of the question. Then she faced the boy's angry wonder.

"You're going to do just that," she answered. "I let the lieutenant go, because I wanted him out of the way. I suppose he's all right in his place, but this isn't a naval engagement. *You* are to stay here because I need you."

"Are you stark, driving crazy?"

"We shall see." She laughed quiveringly, softly. "Wait! He will come." And then, to herself, beginning again her restless pacing up and down: "Oh, I must hold him, Steven—hold him till she gives him up and comes here to me for comfort, as she always has. My little Gretchen—my Margaret—for *comfort*! He will come. Wait!"

"Do I look like waiting?" broke forth Steven, who in all these wandering words of hers had been looking for some clew that might have escaped him. And now, deciding that Elinor was either mad or in collusion with the runaways, he flung himself on the door, and wrenched and turned, crying out: "It's an outrage! Give me that key! You are aiding him!" Then, facing her, speaking as if to her heart: "For God's sake, think what it means! In another minute, she'll be saying the words! She loves me, Elinor! Before God, she loves me!"

"I know it," answered Elinor.

"And yet," shouted Steven, "you hold me here! What have we ever done to you that you take our fates in your hands in this crazy way? Don't think of me. She'll probably never marry me, anyhow—but she—she's nothing but a kid. Think of her! Give me that key! My God! I feel it in me to threaten you!"



"Which way 'd she go?" he demanded violently. "Think! You've got to think!"

"Listen, Steven!" She spoke gently. "You could not find her in a year. If you did, it would be the worst thing that could happen. What authority have you? What right?"

"Right?" shouted Steven. "Common humanity——"

"Humanity be damned!" said Elinor. "Don't you *know* what a bungler you are? What could you do that she wouldn't have every right to resent? She may be a kid, but she's not your kid. No. There's one chance—one. And I'm staking her happiness and yours—mine, too—on that. He is mine. These Monday evenings have made him mine. These other evenings, too—and mornings, sometimes, and afternoons—— You don't understand—but shall I ever forget what they have been, the half shame, half hatred—and

all while she was ill? Do you think he will marry before he comes to me? And here I shall hold him. Here she shall find him when she comes to tell me how he has failed her. For she will grow tired of waiting—mark my words!—and she will come, too. And because I shall have no words to comfort her, ever again, I shall send her to you."

Then Steven, who had listened eagerly, broke forth again:

"Do you think I am a child to be trifled with?" And he caught her white wrist in his strong grip. "Give me that key, or I'll take it!"

She twisted from him, gripping it more tightly, and whispering with breathless reproach:

"Steven!"

It was a mere moment's struggle for him to secure the key, leaving her wrist

blue and mercilessly wringing her gripped hand. Then quickly he unlocked the door and flung it open.

Fifine stood in his path. She looked wonderingly at her mistress, clinging whitely to a chair, and then at the flushed face of her mistress' caller, but, disguising the amazement that she must have felt, she announced in a very casual voice:

"Mr. Cribble, madame."

Steven drew back. He cast a quick look at Elinor, and sat down slowly on the Chesterfield.

Elinor laughed. The tears had sprung to her eyes.

"Wait!" she whispered, and leaned heavily against the door.

Fifine spoke quickly:

"He said he had but a moment, madame. He seemed very hurried, indeed, and sat down on a young rubber plant. If you please, madame, I had advised the janitor not to put a plant where the settee used to be."

"Tell him," said Elinor, "to come up at once. And listen attentively." Elinor had straightened now, and was smoothing her hair. "If any one else should come—Miss Gretchen, for instance—show them up also. This door will be closed, and when they are here—when they stand before this door, mind you—*rap!* Not too loudly, but distinctly, so that I shall hear you. But do not open the door until I ring the bell. Then open it—no more—and let them come in."

"Shall I announce them, madame?"

Fifine spoke still in the soft, casual, little tone, although surely these were the most remarkable instructions that she had ever received.

"No," said her mistress. "Simply open the door."

And Fifine went.

Steven rose from the Chesterfield, and said, in a low and humble voice:

"Excuse me, Elinor."

"Oh, Steven!" she cried. "I had forgotten that you were there. Go into the library at once—and don't come out until I say so."

She gave him a little push.

"I was a brute," delayed Steven. "Say that you forgive me!"

"I do—I do! But go in the library, quick!"

And Steven obeyed, scurrying and kicking up the rug, and closing the door behind him. If Elinor wanted Cribble disposed of, why in thunder couldn't she let *him* do it?

Otis entered silently, his manner nervous and disturbed. Elinor extended a gracious hand above the tea table. He did not see the purple bruise about the wrist, but, taking the hand, looked deep into her eyes. Then slowly he released it, and sat down, bowing his head on his hand.

"How late you are, Abelard," she murmured chidingly.

"I have been detained," said Otis.

He did not raise his head.

A sudden sick fear rose in her heart.

"Delayed?" she exclaimed. "On Monday?"

"I am the most wretched man on earth!" he groaned.

Elinor's face was ashen.

"You are not dead, are you?" she smiled tremulously.

"Worse. Far worse!" he answered.

"Married?" The word was a whisper.

There came a deep silence, then Otis replied: "Not yet."

She laughed joyously.

"Then there is no reason for your grief. And"—sternly—"no excuse for your tardiness. Will you have some tea?"

Otis lifted his face.

"Oh, Heloise—" he began.

"Don't call me that now!" she commanded. "Will you have some tea?"

He shook his head sadly.

"Here I am," she went on. "Been sitting here waiting for you the entire afternoon. Deny myself to everybody in order to keep sacred your especial evening. You send me no word, do not appear, and then come straggling in, expecting me to sympathize with some vague— Oh, I have no patience!"

"But I have never come before six. And I tell you that I am the most miserable—"

"Then why won't you have some tea?"

"I have no time. I must go as soon as I have said good-by."

"Good-by? What has happened?"

"Dearest friend," he answered, "you knew, when we met, that I was bound."

"I knew that you were engaged," said Elinor.

"Even so. And, in spite of this, my regard for you has grown until my being seems too small to hold it. Between us, there was no such trivial, external bond as marriage considered. Our relation was too noble, too high. You have been my inspiration, my ideal, all that was uplifting, divine. And now, and now——"

"And now," she broke in, "you have come to say good-by. If I have been all this to you, surely you will not go away!"

"That is for you to say," he answered. "When we met, I was bound. It is for you to say if the mere consummation of this bondage shall separate us."

"You don't mean——" whispered Elinor, rising from her chair and fixing her eyes on his. "It can't be that you—— No—no!"

"Gretchen is waiting for me now," said Otis, "in the rectory of St. Andrew's." He started sharply. "What's that?" he asked.

A chair had overturned suddenly in the library. Elinor ignored the interruption.

"So this is the 'good-by' you've come to say?" she moaned. "You—are—going—to—be—married!"

"Can it be that you care?" cried Otis. "Oh, Heloise!"

She made a tottering movement forward, then sank back into her chair. She closed her eyes.

"Give me my—smelling salts!" she breathed.

Otis wheeled wildly about.

"Where is it?" he cried. "Where are they?"

"In the music cabinet," she directed faintly. "Underneath Tosti's 'Good-by.'"

Otis flew to the cabinet, and scrambled amid the music.

"I can't find it!" he cried. "I don't see it!"

"Hurry!" breathed Elinor, ever more faintly.

"I'll ring for the maid," shouted Otis. "Wait!"

Elinor recovered instantly.

"Don't you dare touch that bell!" she ordered. Then, with renewed misery: "Do you think I want the servants witnessing my agony? Look for it! Look for it!"

And she took up the faint right where she had left off.

Otis ran madly about, looking beneath the piano, shaking the vases, and grabbing behind the hangings.

"Oh, Abelard!" moaned Elinor. "That I should be brought to this! Fan me! If you have any mercy, fan me!"

Otis gave up the search for the smelling salts, and looked wildly about for a fan. Seeing none, the desperate youth seized the tail of his own coat, and, pulling it about, employed it in a frantic effort to revive his lady.

"Do you—do you think a little tea would help you?" he asked.

"Will you"—faintly—"take some, too, Abelard?"

"Yes—yes," breathed Otis, and tremulously prepared a cup. He knelt to administer it, and Elinor, opening her eyes at last, looked vaguely about.

"What have you said to me, Abelard?" she asked.

And Otis, still kneeling, answered wildly:

"Oh, my goddess, little did I dream how much you cared! I thought I would bring this message that lies so heavy on my heart, and go my way. What have you always said to me? A poet should never marry. A poet should dwell upon the mountaintop, amid the eternal snows. If only——"

There sounded a slow, distinct knocking on the hall door. But only Elinor seemed to hear, and started to her feet.

"If only," said Otis, clinging to her hand, "if only I had known!"

She looked down into his upturned countenance, thankful that neither of them faced the door. She drew out her handkerchief and held it to her eyes. How could she witness the first shock of Gretchen's revelation?

"It is true," she answered, groping blindly for the bell. "Too true. A poet should never marry. I would have sacrificed you to your art. And because I was so noble, this is my reward. But speak the truth to me, Abelard. Have you ever loved me?"

Her hand had found the bell, and she pushed it vigorously.

"You know my love already," breathed Abelard. "My angel! My beautiful!"

Slowly the door swung open. Otis did not start. It was only Elinor who heard, and closer she pressed the handkerchief to her eyes. In this crucial moment, somehow, she could not find her voice.

And all the time it was not Gretchen who beheld the touching scene, but Lieutenant Craig. He had come down the hall on a trot, and was much annoyed by Fifine's precaution to knock at the door—a proceeding no doubt connected with the whole mystery of Monday afternoon. And then, though no voice had bidden her, Fifine had silently opened the door.

The lieutenant very nearly bolted through. Then he stopped short, with a deep gasp, and stood perfectly still, astonishment writ large upon his face. Immediately he turned, intending, in the name of courtesy, to make a quiet exit, but Elinor had spoken then, and he determined, by Heaven, to see this thing through!

"Dear Abelard!" moaned Elinor, into her handkerchief.

It was all that she could manage at the moment. Poor, poor little Gretchen! What must be in her heart?

"I am a dove," said Otis, "a dove lost in the storm of this material age. I must seek shelter. I must find a habitation. It is you I love, even as you love me! But we may not wed each other."

There was a snort by the door,

quickly repressed. Gretchen was taking it hard! If only she would come on in, and end this agony! Elinor made a brave effort.

"I have no money," she said.

"Nor I," breathed Otis, his face bowed on her hand. "Only those gross souls who cannot understand the beauties of the highest possess the things of this world. But, oh, my Heloise, my one love, though our bodies are divided, our spirits shall dwell in a marriage not of this earth. Marry the one who, though his eyes are sealed to the true meaning of love, can yet deck your beauty as it deserves. I will go to her——"

And then even Otis heard the exclamation with which the lieutenant entered the room. He stumbled to his feet. Elinor uncovered her eyes. She drew back as if some one had struck her flatly across the face. Then whitely she stood up and looked at the lieutenant.

"Madam," he said, the words fairly bristling as he let them fall, "I trust you will pardon what may appear an intrusion. I was asked to walk directly up, and I did so. To you, sir, I would say that not while I am alive will you go to her, if your intention relates in any way to my niece."

He waited for Otis to speak, and Otis attempted to avail himself of the opportunity, but no words came.

"I have here," said the lieutenant, "a letter written by Miss Love, in which she announces her determination to marry you. She knew me so well, it seems, that she did not trouble to seek my consent. I assume that she is now awaiting you. You will oblige me by stating where."

"In the rectory of St. Andrew's," murmured Otis.

The lieutenant regarded him politely.

"Are you lying, sir?" he inquired.

"No," answered Elinor. "That is right."

Very formally the lieutenant turned to her.

"I think, madam," he observed, "from what I have witnessed, that I



"Love?" she laughed brokenly. "My dear sir, you must not talk about things you don't understand."

may rely on you to keep your friend entertained and out of other mischief. You will assist me so far in preventing any further complication."

She answered quietly: "You may rely on me."

Her eyes had never left his face.

He turned to go. And then, just as Elinor had known she would, came Gretchen and stood in the open door. From one to the other of them she

looked, dressed in a little, dark-blue tailored suit, carrying a satchel, and wet as could be with the rain.

"So here you are!" remarked the lieutenant.

Gretchen was looking at Otis.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, in a low voice.

There was a silence.

"I suggest," offered her uncle, "that you direct your questions to Miss Vaile.

And when she has answered you, you may come home with me."

Gretchen set down the satchel wearily.

"I knew you'd be angry," she sighed. She came in and stood near Otis. "If I had known Uncle Bobbin would be here," she said to Elinor, "I shouldn't have come." And then to Otis: "I thought something dreadful had happened. Didn't you understand the place and—at six o'clock?"

Otis was silent. With the lieutenant's eye upon him, how could he explain? With the lieutenant standing so close to the door, how could he depart as he really ought to do out of this medley?

"I've been waiting an hour," complained Gretchen, seeming not in the least afraid of anybody. "Waiting as you told me to in that wretched little room. And then the rain began, and I distinctly heard a rat gnawing, so I left. I tried to telephone, and they said you were gone. What has happened?" And then, turning to Elinor: "What's the matter with him? Why won't he explain?"

She moved to Elinor's side, and was encircled by her arm. The lieutenant answered her question.

"Possibly, my dear, out of deference to Miss Vaile. Perhaps, as a witness and not an accomplice, the office of disclosure devolves on me. After your note came—as soon, that is, as I could collect my wits, I went to Mr. Cribble's lodgings. From there, I traced him here. I was asked to come straight up, and I did so, only to find"—the lieutenant's fluent testimony seemed suddenly impeded; his face grew red—"only to find the man you were waiting to elope with, making violent love to the woman who not two hours before had consented to become my wife. Yes, and receiving encouragement, too. Pronounced encouragement."

"You?" whispered Gretchen, withdrawing from Elinor's arm. "You?" Then, with a wide, swift look at Otis: "Why—why did you want to marry me?"

Then, as Otis still kept silent, the lieutenant said:

"I am afraid one so small should not ask such large questions."

"Was it—for—money?" asked Gretchen, her dark eyes still on Otis.

"You should have heard it!" said the lieutenant. "He stated it so—delicately."

"But," said Gretchen, "why didn't you say frankly that you needed money? We might have given you a little. Marrying is such a clumsy way of getting money." And then suddenly, as if the whole thing had but fully opened before her: "Don't let me ever see you again! I never did love you! I love somebody else!"

"What's that noise in the library?" asked the lieutenant.

But Elinor seemed not to hear, and Gretchen hurried on:

"I was just being true to you!" she cried. "I never knew what you were talking about half the time. And, anyhow, I don't believe you're a real poet. Nothing real would act so sham. A real burglar wouldn't, or a real cannibal. And, the idea! Who would have dreamed of such a thing? The idea of making violent love to a woman—after you'd sat on her knee! Oh, Uncle Bobbin, you needn't look like that! He did! She told me so! And as for you, Elinor—"

Gretchen turned about in the full flush of her wrath. Elinor's eyes met hers—soft, tender, infinitely sweet. The hot words died on Gretchen's lips. Her own eyes filled. She turned to her uncle, and, covering her face, sobbed on his breast.

Elinor spoke to Otis:

"You may go now."

He gave her a narrowed look.

"You are through with me. Is that what you mean?"

"If you like," said Elinor.

The lieutenant had moved to the window with Gretchen, and was comforting her with blundering little hand pats, and mumbled words.

"I see what you have meant," said Otis, his suppressed rage shaking the

words. "I suppose you are proud of your work."

"You were only a feature of it," she answered. "I never boast until I'm through."

"You win my love deliberately," muttered he, "and now——"

"Love?" she laughed brokenly. "My dear sir, you must not talk about things you don't understand. You may go now. As you said in your note, 'the end is upon us.'"

"I was your dupe," said Otis.

"Gretchen was yours," she answered him.

"If I have lost," he flung back, "I am not alone. I believe your pretty scheme has proven a bit of a boomerang. Do you think *he* will believe your little story?" He looked at her significantly. "Let him come to me," he suggested.

"Are you going?" inquired Elinor. "Or," glancing toward the lieutenant, "would you like a military escort?"

Otis made his decision quickly, and departed alone.

"Who was that that went out?" asked Gretchen, lifting a wet face.

"That," said the lieutenant, "was the interrupted bridegroom. Come, now. Let's go. He's lost to you. Make up your mind. I've broken the whole thing up."

"He's not all that I've lost," said Gretchen, her eyes meeting Elinor's across the room. Elinor stood by the library door, as if waiting for something. "I've lost something else," said Gretchen, "the thing I was trying to be. I know I've deceived you—dreadfully—but I was being true to my promise. I was being true. I thought *she* was true—and good. I've lost it all!"

"Come, now!" ordered the lieutenant. "Get your little—er—knapsack over there, and we'll go home. That's the place for you and me, Gretchen."

He, too, looked at Elinor.

"But I've lost him, Uncle Bobbin—not Otis—another."

"Another *him*?" exploded Uncle Bobbin.

"Yes—yes—another! For what'll he say—when he hears?"

"Gretchen," said Elinor, "I have

something to say to Lieutenant Craig. Will you leave us together a minute?"

"Certainly," agreed the girl. "I am going now."

"No. I shall be only a moment. Come in here."

Elinor opened the library door. There was something in her manner that commanded obedience, and Gretchen, with dropped eyes, passed into the library. A moment she halted on the threshold, then her joyous little cry, suddenly smothered as by some soft encounter, rang through the room. Elinor closed the door and faced Lieutenant Craig.

"Two hours ago," she said, "I promised to be your wife."

"Do you think I can forget?" He came very close to her. "You conferred on me then," he said unsteadily, "what seemed the greatest honor of my life."

"In that same moment," she answered softly, "you said to me words that made me, as I thought, the happiest of women."

"Madam——"

Elinor raised a hand.

"If I seem to have sullied my vow," she said, "what of yours?"

"Madam, there are some things——"

"So it appears. Two hours ago there were none. The time may come to-day—to-morrow—in a year—when you will know the truth, when you will say to me, 'I understand.' But it will be too late. Do you trust me, or not?"

The lieutenant turned from her. He had expected some patched farce of an explanation—great Heaven, the thing was too bare for any explaining!—and he was in a mood to ignore as courteously as he might any flimsy covering that she might weave. However, she had not attempted to disguise things in the least. She had asked him merely whether he would accept them as they were—or not. He turned away, deeply troubled, and his eye lit on the vase of yellow roses. Ah, it was too plain! It was too plain! She could not invent, even, an excuse.

And as he stood there, pondering the roses, gnawing his mustache, the library door opened, and Gretchen rushed out, bubbling with laughter, followed by

Steven, whose face was radiant as a sun. Elinor waved them back before Lieutenant Craig should turn around. She closed the door behind them. There should be no enlightenment for him, she determined. Like Lady Clare, she meant to know "if there be any faith in man."

"To-day," brooded the lieutenant. "To-morrow—in a year." And then aloud, wheeling about: "This is intolerable! Tell me now! If there can be an explanation, let me have it!"

She smiled at him rather sadly.

"Can you believe," she said, "the word of a woman whose actions you cannot trust?" Silence. "If in the face of what you have seen, you cannot say 'I trust you,' if you cannot look into my eyes and know, then you are not the man you proclaimed yourself to be, and I will marry no other."

"Elinor!" he said softly.

It was the voice of a soul in struggle. And then he came very close to her and looked down into her eyes. It was a long look, and whether he saw there the lost years, or the love that casts out fear, it matters not, for suddenly he gathered her into his arms and said, with an unsteady note of victory:

"I trust you—now!"

"May we come in?" asked Gretchen.

"If we don't look?" added Steven.

But the library door was already open, and they were looking hard, both of them. The lieutenant seemed rather cross, on the whole, but Elinor smiled at them.

"Wasn't it funny, Uncle Bobbin?" bubbled Gretchen, bouncing about. "And, oh, Elinor, to think I doubted you!"

"And you don't now, Gretchen?"

"Oh, no! But, really, you were very cruel to poor Steven. It was so hard on him listening to everything, and not being able to see."

"Has Steven," inquired the lieutenant, "been here all the time?"

"He has," said Steven. "And jolly hard work it's been to stay. Especially when Cribble told right out where Gretchen was. But the funniest part was where Elinor laid the stage—"

"No," broke in Gretchen. "You said the funniest part was where Uncle Bobbin talked as if he were all swelled up."

"Ahem-m-m-m!" commented Uncle Bobbin. "I am glad I have been amusing, sir. May I ask—"

"Why, no, sir, not amusing," corrected Steven. "It was—it was Elinor, really, who was so comical when she set the stage. I was so worried that I couldn't appreciate it till it began to work out."

"And it worked out wrong!" laughed Gretchen. "Uncle Bobbin came instead of me!"

"What? What?" said Uncle Bobbin.

"Yes, yes, you did!" she cried. "And, oh, Elinor, you are such a dear! And you did it all for me—just to show me what he was!" She clutched Elinor's neck in her two soft arms and rubbed off Uncle Bobbin's kiss with three of her own. "You're a duck of a god-mother," she whispered, "and I wasn't worth it—I wasn't! Did you ever think of *that*?" Then aloud, as if the thought had newly struck her: "It must have been a horrid bore winning him, wasn't it?"

"It was very hard work," said Elinor, "winning him from Gretchen."

"But wasn't it a bore?" persisted Gretchen.

"I never discuss," said Elinor, smiling, "the bad points of my last situation."

"Oh, she had her fun out of it," remarked Steven. "I wish you could have heard all I heard. Believe me!"

"Steven!" rebuked Elinor. "It wasn't funny at all—not to me. And I wouldn't do it again for anybody."

"On my life," said Lieutenant Craig. "I'm glad to hear that! Oh, I trust you, and all that—I see that it was merely your little way of enlightening Gretchen, and while it's a way I never should have chosen—still, it's all right, seeing it was as successful on the whole as my own blunt methods might have been. I trust you—yes—but I'd rather feel that I'm not coming home on future rainy afternoons to find long-

haired individuals weeping over my wife's hand."

"And receiving encouragement, too," quoted Steven pompously. "Pronounced encouragement."

"You young scamp!" The lieutenant turned on him savagely. "Are you and Gretchen going home?"

"Right now," said Gretchen.

And they departed together.

Alone with Elinor, Lieutenant Craig remarked, after a constrained pause:

"There's only one thing I'd like to know."

Elinor touched the bell:

"Peeping, lieutenant," she said, "back at the first chapters?"

"No!" he cried. "I trust you absolutely. But," bursting forth, "that positively abhorrent accusation of Gretchen's!"

"Ifine," said Elinor, "some hot tea. Continue, lieutenant." She sat down.

"I—I shouldn't have paid the least attention to it," he obeyed, "none at all—if Gretchen hadn't asserted that you told her yourself."

"I see. And, trusting me so implicitly, you are obliged to take my word for it that I— Ah! Here is the tea! A little rum, lieutenant?"

"That you—that you— Yes, yes. A little rum. No sugar. That— Well, madam?"

"That I had held him on my knee!" finished Elinor, pouring sadly. She set down the urn and leaned an elbow on the table, looking up into the man's eyes. "That is the darkest portion of my past," she said. "Will you sit while I recite it to you?"

"No," said the lieutenant stiffly. "No, thanks. So it's true. True." He cleared his throat. There was silence. "You admit that it was not recently, however?" he asked.

"Oh, quite past," she answered. "I might almost be said to have reformed."

"And—er—the situation was not reversed? You did not—er—sit— This is intolerable! You did not sit on—"

"On *his* knee?" assisted Elinor. "Oh, no! I would never have done that."

"Ahem-m-m!" observed the lieutenant. "It strikes me that one is no worse than the other."

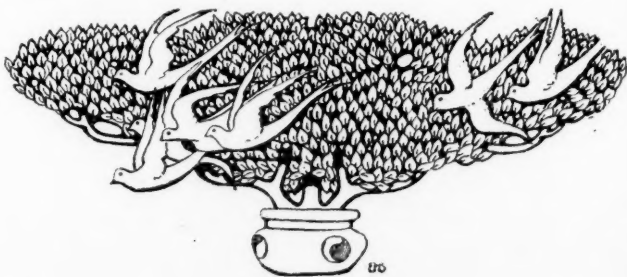
"I am sorry you feel that way," she answered. "He didn't seem to care. He trusted me—almost as much as you do. He was so nice and soft and cuddlesome—" The lieutenant knocked over the cream jug, and begged her pardon. "He laid his head on my shoulder—his blond, curly head—"

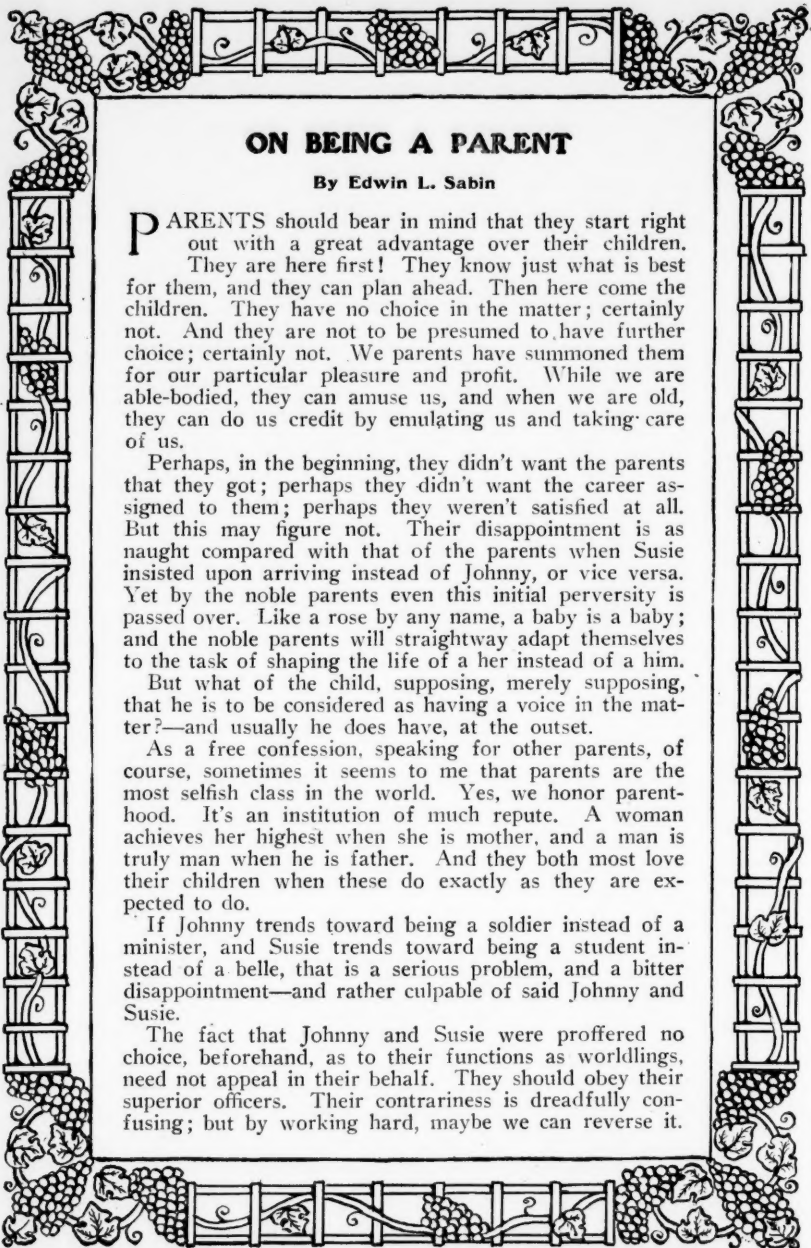
"My God!" said the lieutenant. "This is—"

"He was about this long," explained Elinor, and measured off two feet on the table, "and he weighed at least sixteen pounds. He was a baby! I never—I *never* let on to you that I was a spring chicken! And, oh," she added fervently, "it's so sweet to be trusted!"

The lieutenant looked at her, then straight before him. Then he wiped his brow and sank weakly into a chair.

"Never—never again!" he breathed. And then, more steadily: "I think I'll take a cup of rum with a little tea in it."





ON BEING A PARENT

By Edwin L. Sabin

PARENTS should bear in mind that they start right out with a great advantage over their children.

They are here first! They know just what is best for them, and they can plan ahead. Then here come the children. They have no choice in the matter; certainly not. And they are not to be presumed to have further choice; certainly not. We parents have summoned them for our particular pleasure and profit. While we are able-bodied, they can amuse us, and when we are old, they can do us credit by emulating us and taking care of us.

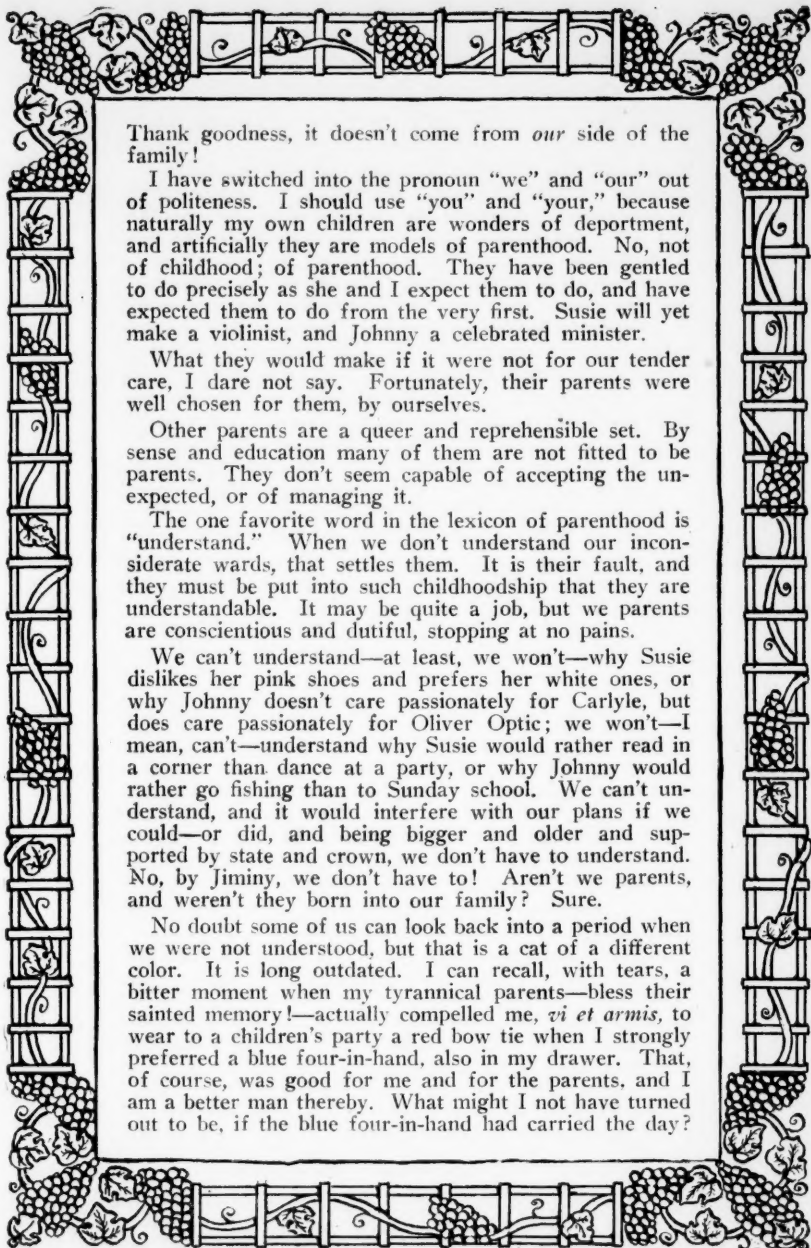
Perhaps, in the beginning, they didn't want the parents that they got; perhaps they didn't want the career assigned to them; perhaps they weren't satisfied at all. But this may figure not. Their disappointment is as naught compared with that of the parents when Susie insisted upon arriving instead of Johnny, or vice versa. Yet by the noble parents even this initial perversity is passed over. Like a rose by any name, a baby is a baby; and the noble parents will straightway adapt themselves to the task of shaping the life of a her instead of a him.

But what of the child, supposing, merely supposing, that he is to be considered as having a voice in the matter?—and usually he does have, at the outset.

As a free confession, speaking for other parents, of course, sometimes it seems to me that parents are the most selfish class in the world. Yes, we honor parenthood. It's an institution of much repute. A woman achieves her highest when she is mother, and a man is truly man when he is father. And they both most love their children when these do exactly as they are expected to do.

If Johnny trends toward being a soldier instead of a minister, and Susie trends toward being a student instead of a belle, that is a serious problem, and a bitter disappointment—and rather culpable of said Johnny and Susie.

The fact that Johnny and Susie were proffered no choice, beforehand, as to their functions as worldlings, need not appeal in their behalf. They should obey their superior officers. Their contrariness is dreadfully confusing; but by working hard, maybe we can reverse it.



Thank goodness, it doesn't come from *our* side of the family!

I have switched into the pronoun "we" and "our" out of politeness. I should use "you" and "your," because naturally my own children are wonders of deportment, and artificially they are models of parenthood. No, not of childhood; of parenthood. They have been gentled to do precisely as she and I expect them to do, and have expected them to do from the very first. Susie will yet make a violinist, and Johnny a celebrated minister.

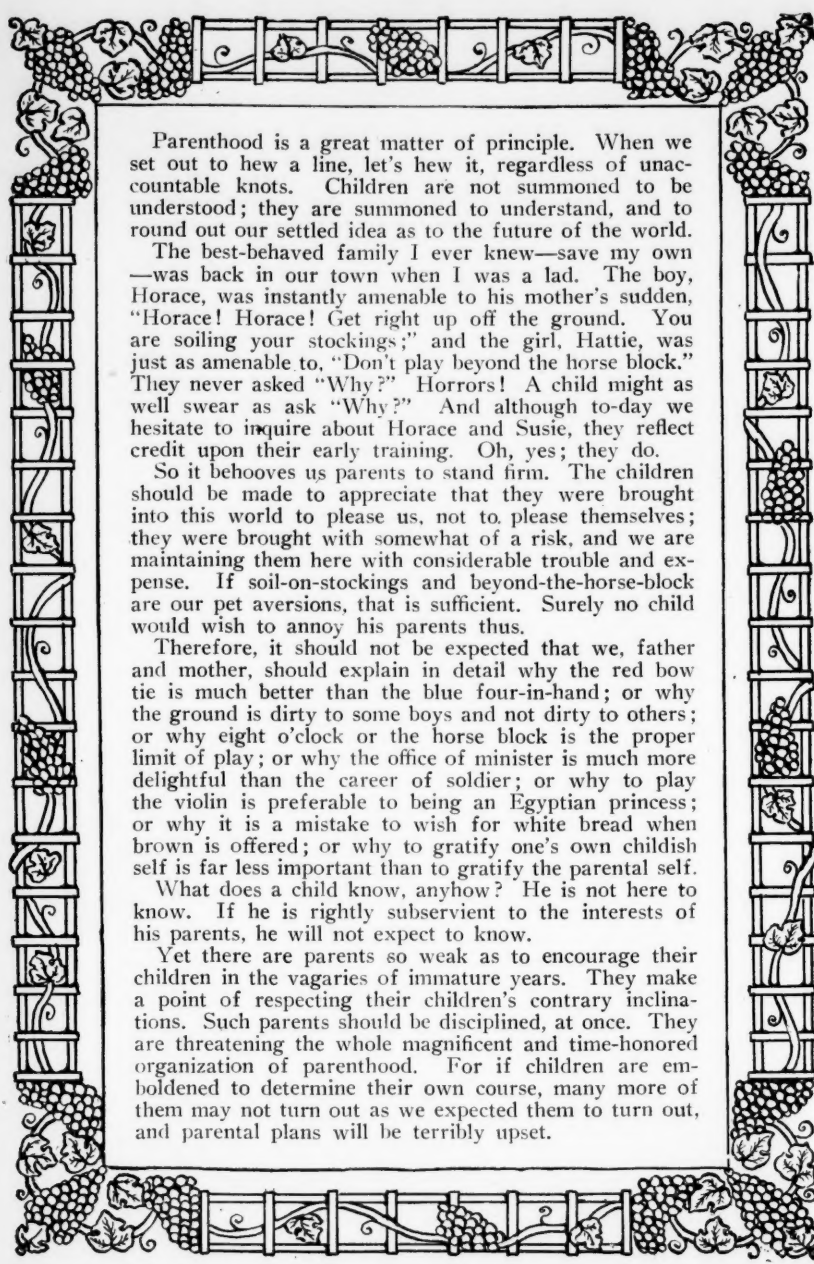
What they would make if it were not for our tender care, I dare not say. Fortunately, their parents were well chosen for them, by ourselves.

Other parents are a queer and reprehensible set. By sense and education many of them are not fitted to be parents. They don't seem capable of accepting the unexpected, or of managing it.

The one favorite word in the lexicon of parenthood is "understand." When we don't understand our inconsiderate wards, that settles them. It is their fault, and they must be put into such childhoodship that they are understandable. It may be quite a job, but we parents are conscientious and dutiful, stopping at no pains.

We can't understand—at least, we won't—why Susie dislikes her pink shoes and prefers her white ones, or why Johnny doesn't care passionately for Carlyle, but does care passionately for Oliver Optic; we won't—I mean, can't—understand why Susie would rather read in a corner than dance at a party, or why Johnny would rather go fishing than to Sunday school. We can't understand, and it would interfere with our plans if we could—or did, and being bigger and older and supported by state and crown, we don't have to understand. No, by Jiminy, we don't have to! Aren't we parents, and weren't they born into our family? Sure.

No doubt some of us can look back into a period when we were not understood, but that is a cat of a different color. It is long outdated. I can recall, with tears, a bitter moment when my tyrannical parents—bless their sainted memory!—actually compelled me, *vi et armis*, to wear to a children's party a red bow tie when I strongly preferred a blue four-in-hand, also in my drawer. That, of course, was good for me and for the parents, and I am a better man thereby. What might I not have turned out to be, if the blue four-in-hand had carried the day?



Parenthood is a great matter of principle. When we set out to hew a line, let's hew it, regardless of unaccountable knots. Children are not summoned to be understood; they are summoned to understand, and to round out our settled idea as to the future of the world.

The best-behaved family I ever knew—save my own—was back in our town when I was a lad. The boy, Horace, was instantly amenable to his mother's sudden, "Horace! Horace! Get right up off the ground. You are soiling your stockings;" and the girl, Hattie, was just as amenable to, "Don't play beyond the horse block." They never asked "Why?" Horrors! A child might as well swear as ask "Why?" And although to-day we hesitate to inquire about Horace and Susie, they reflect credit upon their early training. Oh, yes; they do.

So it behooves us parents to stand firm. The children should be made to appreciate that they were brought into this world to please us, not to, please themselves; they were brought with somewhat of a risk, and we are maintaining them here with considerable trouble and expense. If soil-on-stockings and beyond-the-horse-block are our pet aversions, that is sufficient. Surely no child would wish to annoy his parents thus.

Therefore, it should not be expected that we, father and mother, should explain in detail why the red bow tie is much better than the blue four-in-hand; or why the ground is dirty to some boys and not dirty to others; or why eight o'clock or the horse block is the proper limit of play; or why the office of minister is much more delightful than the career of soldier; or why to play the violin is preferable to being an Egyptian princess; or why it is a mistake to wish for white bread when brown is offered; or why to gratify one's own childish self is far less important than to gratify the parental self.

What does a child know, anyhow? He is not here to know. If he is rightly subservient to the interests of his parents, he will not expect to know.

Yet there are parents so weak as to encourage their children in the vagaries of immature years. They make a point of respecting their children's contrary inclinations. Such parents should be disciplined, at once. They are threatening the whole magnificent and time-honored organization of parenthood. For if children are emboldened to determine their own course, many more of them may not turn out as we expected them to turn out, and parental plans will be terribly upset.

The Fall of the House of Von Glehn

by Virginia Middleton



Author of "Cotrelly's First Capture," "The Harriet Mead Case," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD THOMAS DENISON

SEVERAL of the circumstances that led to the fall of the House of Vonglehn were of so purely fortuitous a nature that Gustav, fourth of the line, is almost justified in considering himself the very plaything of a wantonly capricious destiny.

For example, if Mrs. Henry van Wyck Blaisdell had not carried over into the period of her affluence some of the thrifty habits of her earlier years, the thing would not have happened. Or if, even granting her a certain measure of parsimoniousness, she had not chanced—simply and disgustingly and unreasonably *chanced*—upon Peter Lecher in his basement shop, near Third Avenue, her frugality need never have brought disaster to the Vonglehns.

Or if Peter Lecher, grizzled, wrinkled, bow-spectacled, smoke-impregnated old German, had not happened—merely happened!—to be a creature of habit in the matter of Sunday visits, the outcome might have been different and a matter of unconcern to Vonglehn. And certain hundreds of thousands of dollars now in the United States treasury might still have been swelling the coffers of Gustav, fourth of the line, head of the great art firm that was so magnificent, so old, that it was an institution, not a shop, and, as an institution, disdained by a single gilded letter to announce its presence in the great, solemn, brick building it had occupied for

a generation at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and — Street.

But Peter Lecher was a creature of habit, and he would no more have foregone his Sunday visit to Mark Cotrelly, of the customs department, than he would have foregone his long German pipe and his pewter-hooded stein of beer each evening. Mark, as it had been, diabolically arranged in the conspiracy for Vonglehn's overthrow, had pulled old Peter's granddaughter, a pink-aproned five-year-old, out of the Bronx River one Saturday afternoon five years before; since which time nothing could keep Peter from visiting Mark on Sunday afternoon except an occasional journey out into the suburbs to visit the little pink-aproned wisp of a thing, and, secondarily, her parents.

But of all this Mr. Vonglehn was naturally ignorant, as indeed he remains to this day. And he has always, since the outcome, furiously denied that the fact that he had practiced dishonesty for years was an adequate reason why he should at last have been discovered. Years? Perhaps the lofty House of Vonglehn had practiced dishonesty for generations. Certainly Gustav viewed it as one views the habits to which one was born.

Vonglehn, as every one is aware whose art education is sufficient to distinguish between a Raphael Madonna and a "Good-night and Good-morning"

chromo, has been the purveyor of art to the elect of the earth for three generations. The fourth generation antecedent to Gustav of the ill luck, Gustav of the present, saw the first Gustav slowly establishing the business. He had a marvelous genius for estimating the values of those things that are not matters of daily barter—of old paintings, old laces, old paneling. He had an instinct for hidden treasures—for Peruginis overlaid by the desecrations of modern paint, and the like. But not until his death and the accession of his son was the Vonglehn reputation established. After the second generation, it had been easy for the Vonglehns. Like great fortunes, great reputations grow by their own impetus.

By the time the Gustav of our tale had come into possession of his kingdom, the Vonglehns numbered royalties among their customers, advised American millionaire connoisseurs, and snubbed parvenu plutocrats. In London, Paris, and New York, their great art establishments stood upon the most fashionable thoroughfares. They furnished palaces; they hung the walls of great galleries; they filled the cabinets of famous curio collectors with the most expensive rarities.

They dealt in all art objects from Venetian palaces to Marie Antoinette fans. It was they who brought from Venice, piece by piece, the façade of Mrs. Spiegelheimer's Seventy-second Street house; it was they who sold the young Prince of Peronia the tortoiseshell and amber combs that had once been the Pompadour's, and that he, with a discriminating perception of harmonies, wished to present to a certain lady. They spoke with a final authority on paintings, and told a prospective buyer whether the canvas that tempted him was a genuine Titian or a clever forgery. Great museums had been known to seek their advice, and Mr. Gustav Vonglehn, hero of this tale, protagonist of this tragedy, always gave it gratis. He was known as a public-spirited citizen, and had once even taken time to belong to a New York art commission. He said that he felt he owed

it to the community to serve it in whatever way he could.

Next in the list of actors comes Mr. Henry van Wyck Blaisdell, whom the accident of marriage furnished with a small rôle in the drama. Mr. Blaisdell was fifty-seven, self-conscious, conventional, a millionaire who never got any fun out of his millions until he electrified his world by marrying Miss Paula Pomfret, née Burke, of a celebrated original sextet.

He was a widower who for fifteen years had successfully resisted veiled importunities to second marriage when he suddenly astounded his friends in this manner. There was considerable inquisitiveness among the more frivolous of his acquaintance as to where he had met Miss Pomfret, whose orbit would have been supposed remote from his; it had been assumed that his time was painstakingly divided among his various interests, the directorates on which he served, and the dullest and richest of his clubs. Curiosity was never satisfied in this respect. By and by, family wrath simmered down, and public interest died, also. It remained merely a matter for mild mirth that a man whose chief aim had always seemed to be to do the correct thing at the correct time should, at fifty-seven, have married a lady of no particular antecedents, thirty years his junior.

Mr. Blaisdell had always gone to Vonglehn for his art objects, just as he had always gone to Budd for his shirts and to Dunlap for his hats; he hated experimentation, and he always patronized the most expensive of each class, regarding the best as not quite good enough for himself, but still all that could be compassed. He always traveled upon the best boats and trains, put up at the most exclusive hotels, visited the most exclusive hostesses, and generally eschewed the vulgar and the commonplace, wherever these were to be escaped by the payment of money, or by fastidious choice. The new Mrs. Blaisdell gratified him by the promptness with which she adopted his standards as her own, and became an adept in spurning the ordinary.

It was in Vonglehn's London establishment that the new Mrs. Blaisdell, enjoying a prolonged honeymoon journey, caught sight of the Elizabethan court cupboard that was destined to have so remarkable an effect upon the Vonglehn fortunes. It was a wonderful structure of time-mellowed oak. Young Mrs. Blaisdell had already developed a contempt for mere mahogany, and could damn an antique with lifted eyebrows and the remark, "American Georgian," in the most complete and effective manner. The dining room of the earlier Mrs. Blaisdell had been furnished in this comparatively modern style; the new Mrs. Blaisdell purposed on her return to New York to change all that, and it was with the Elizabethan court cupboard that she began her campaign.

The head of Vonglehn's London house, the suave and diplomatic Mr. Carter, after calling Mrs. Blaisdell's attention to the manner in which the Gothic motif of the carvings on the ancient sideboard was merging into the design of a later period, tried to induce her to purchase the table and chairs that went with it. He also offered to scour the ancient homes of England for an Elizabethan fireplace, and made quite sure that he would be able to obtain one; in fact, he almost knew where to place his hands upon one.

Paula listened, almost persuaded. It fired her imagination to think that a descendant of one of William the Conqueror's lieutenants might have to ravage her ancestral home to furnish forth an abode for her, Paula Burke, late of South Bend, Indiana. But Paula was a good girl. There were still out in South Bend, Indiana, several other Burkes for whom she intended that her husband should play the benefactor. She would, as she expressed it in her thoughts, "go slow on the Elizabethan proposition" until after she had secured the money to pay the mortgage on her father's house, to send her brother to college, and to give her married sister a competence and her unmarried sister an education. She resisted the swell-

ing temptation to despoil an English castle. She would buy but the one piece—this time—the court cupboard. Paula would have perished before calling the ancient piece a sideboard, once she had learned the earlier word!

Mr. Carter was properly depressed and properly hopeful at her decision. He was sure that had Mr. Vonglehn himself been in London, Mrs. Blaisdell could never have resisted the complete set; but he was also quite certain that when she had set up the court cupboard in New York, she would see how impossible it was to match it with anything modern in the chair and table line. Of course, the chairs and table that she was now allowing—most deplorably allowing—to escape her, would be gone by that time, but—the London manager smiled reassuringly—he still had two or three Elizabethan homes undespoiled; doubtless he could arrange matters for her at a later date. It might be more expensive—this set for fifteen thousand dollars was ridiculous, but poor, dear Lady Wardour was in dreadful straits when she allowed it to leave the manor house! However, Mrs. Blaisdell might rely upon the House of Vonglehn to do its very best for her when the moment of her awakening came.

And Paula gloated over her treasure, admired, at Mr. Carter's tutelage, the wonderful, soft tone that age had given the oak, felt with the satin of her tapered forefinger the smoothness of the carvings—"only the centuries can do that, Mrs. Blaisdell!" the London manager assured her—exclaimed over the tiny wormholes on the inside of the old wood, lovingly fingered the ancient hinges and clasps. After all, great as would be the purchasing power of six thousand dollars in the middle-class circles of South Bend, Indiana, it was not too much to pay for a wonderful piece like this! One bought history with such furniture!

"You have only to notify the New York house, Mrs. Blaisdell," said Mr. Carter, when the sale was completed, "when you decide that you want us to match this for you. That will be about

two days after you have it set up in New York," he added, with pleasant conviction.

The Blaisdells finished their leisurely honeymoon trip, and the autumn saw them back in New York. Mr. Blaisdell went West with a party of Eastern capitalists to look over some mining property, the operation of which he and his associates were asked to finance; and his wife, caught in the solitude of those who have given up one social set before acquiring another, busied herself with the rearrangement of her New York house.

The court cupboard, consigned to her in the care of the New York branch of Vonglehn's, awaited her. As an antique, it did not compete with American labor; no hard-working cabinetmaker was threatened with a dinner pail less full because of the toil of a foreign cabinetmaker of the late sixteenth century; consequently the sideboard had come in free of the forty-odd per-cent duty imposed on modern furniture. It was duly installed, and Paula sat down to enjoy it.

Two days later, she was annoyed to find that she could

not budge the drawer immediately above the short legs. She struggled with the refractory handles, and she summoned all her household staff to struggle with it, but it was stuck fast. She considered calling up Vonglehn's on the telephone and demanding the services of a repairer; but the thought of South Bend, and her early creed that it was useless to spend much money on what did not show, caused her to change her mind. Any cheap, little man would do. Where had she seen a modest cabinetmaker's sign only recently?

Ah, she remembered! It was the day when her automobile, crossing the city toward the East Side that she might escape to Long Island, had been suddenly stalled near the Third Avenue elevated tracks. She remembered the very look of the sign projecting at



He blinked at her over his iron-rimmed specta-



cles, and said: "Lady, vat can I do for you?"

right angles from a basement area door. "P. Lecher, Cabinetmaker and Upholsterer. Mattresses Remade, et cetera."

It had been a homemade sign, and not all the s's had curved in the same direction. P. Lecher would doubtless come and put the drawer in order for fifty cents. Vonglehn would add five dollars to his account for any such service. The thrifty Mrs. Blaisdell ordered her motor car, and set out for P. Lecher.

P. Lecher was in his dark, little quarters, surrounded by disabled chairs and tables, looking not unlike a furniture surgeon in some German fairy tale. He was ripping the cover from an old mattress, and rumbling forth an old German folk song.

"Blau ist ein Blümlein, das heisst Vergiss-nichtmein,"

he was proclaiming, as he tore away at the mattress' binding. As the shadow of a lady fell athwart his work, he looked up. Paula was a vision of a kind unusual in the basement—slim, colorful, elegant beyond anything in Peter Lecher's remembrance. He blinked at her over his iron-rimmed spectacles, and said:

"Lady, vat can I do for you?"

Paula told him that he could take a pleasant automobile trip across the town with her, and could open a refractory drawer in a sideboard. She called the court cupboard a sideboard in talking to Peter Lecher, because she thought that he, pursuing his business in a dark, East Side basement, might not be familiar with the terminology of Vonglehn's magnificent establishments.

Peter Lecher rubbed his grizzled locks so that they stood out in a hundred new directions—which had seemed impossible before he actually accomplished it—and debated the matter. How long would it take him? Half an hour at the most, Mrs. Blaisdell assured him. He could reach the house in five minutes, and she would send him back in the same luxurious style. She dwelt rather pointedly upon this, intending that the cabinetmaker should

consider it when he came to demand his half dollar—or perhaps his quarter of a dollar.

"Vell," said Peter, acquiescing.

He put aside the knife with which he was ripping the mattress, found his hat, shapeless and gray with age, wrote upon a slate outside his door the words: "Back at twelf," found a few tools, which he put into his pocket, and obediently followed the lady.

Peter's first exclamation upon beholding the court cupboard was gratifying to Paula's new pride of proprietorship. It was a very pretty piece of work, he gravely told her.

"They did these things very well in the old days," said Paula casually.

"They do them very vell now," chuckled Peter Lecher, pulling at the refractory drawer with gently persuasive fingers.

"You won't find anybody turning out the like of that to-day!" cried the lady combatively.

Peter laughed, a deep, contented, not impertinent, but entirely contradictory, laugh.

"Lady," he said, "ven you think this cabinet vas made, *heim*?"

Paula, with an air, recited the authentic history of the court cupboard, as related to her by the fluent Mr. Carter. She spoke with a friendly air of "poor, dear Lady Wardour." One might have inferred that she had bought the piece to help an impoverished friend.

Peter, still persuading the drawer with clever, accustomed fingers, continued to laugh, not scornfully, but indulgently, like a grown-up laughing sympathetically, but denyingly, at a child's belief in Santa Claus.

"Lady," he chuckled, "you think a piece of vood three hundert *yahr* old ain't done mit svelling yet? You think a drawer three hundert *yahr* old ain't seasoned yet? No, lady! The old piece, he don't stick."

At this second, his manipulations produced an effect, and he almost fell backward with the sudden yielding of the drawer.

Paula was angry; she was also af-

frighted. Paula had never allowed any one to obtain an advantage over her in all her strenuous life; she couldn't endure believing herself tricked by Mr. Carter. In her perturbation, she reverted somewhat to a style of speech suggestive of the Burke ménage in South Bend, and of the famous original sextet.

"What are you trying to give me, you old fool?" she cried sharply. "What do you know about antiques?"

"Vell," replied the unruffled Mr. Lecher, still like the indulgent adult who cannot be enraged by childish outbursts of temper, as he began to plane the time-worn bottom of the drawer, "I haf vorked mit some of the famous cabinetmakers, I tell you. I haf made some antiques myself."

"So!" cried Paula triumphantly. "So! You're a common cheat, are you? And you believe that every one else is one! But this was bought from Vonglehn's, a firm that doesn't have to fake things, Mr. What's-your-name!"

"My name is Peter Lecher, lady; and I haf not been a common cheat. I make a mistake ven I say I haf made antiques myself. No, I haf made a fine cabinetwork, and my boss, he makes it the antique! I haf nothing to do mit that. I make the fine cabinetwork in the fine shops, in my day, before my eyes get bad."

Paula was a vigorous personality. She could not dismiss the matter as it deserved; she knew it was undignified, unfitting, to continue the discussion, but she wanted to make the stupid old man acknowledge himself in the wrong as far as her court cupboard was concerned.

"Do you mean to tell me," she cried derisively, "that you can get modern oak that color?"

"Lady," said Peter Lecher pityingly, "they can make modern oak any color vich they like. They can bury the oak boards, lady, in the damp earth; they can put them in boxes filled mit ammonia fumes; they can treat them mit acids."

Paula's fear was growing. Had that detestable London manager dared to

hoodwink her, just because she was not born to a knowledge of Elizabethan furniture?

"I suppose they can make a piece of carving that left the carver's knife yesterday as smooth as this," she said scornfully, as she caressed the paneling of the cupboard.

"Yes, lady," replied Peter Lecher calmly, unaware, apparently, of the intended satire of her speech. "They can do that mit a sand blower."

"And I suppose they can engage enough worms to bore a million tiny holes into the wood in a day? Do the worms demand union wages?"

"It don't need worms, lady. All it needs is a charge of bird shot. But you don't need to worry none, lady. This is a goot piece of vork. This is hand-carved, all right, and the joining, it is goot. It is done as goot as any the old makers ever turned out. It's a goot piece of vork, and vorth all of seven hundred dollar—maybe eight!"

Paula glared at him speechlessly for a second, as he sat, tailorwise, upon his legs and gave all his attention to a delicate planing of the drawer, laid upside down before him. But speechlessness was not a prevailing habit of hers.

"How dare you?" she exclaimed. "Eight hundred dollars! You pig-headed old Dutchman, you! Do you know that piece cost six thousand dollars, and that we know the history of it from the beginning of time? It is I don't know how many years old. It is genuine Elizabethan. Eight hundred fiddlesticks!"

Peter Lecher was apparently unmoved by her epithet. He went on planing very delicately.

"You vas cheated," he maintained obstinately. "You vas cheated. No vood three hundred *yahr* old svells like this vood has svollen. You vas cheated."

Paula lapsed far enough into her past to rip out a very naughty-sounding word. Peter Lecher pushed his spectacles back upon his forehead, ceased to survey his work, and surveyed her with grave disapproval.



HAROLD THOMAS DENISON

"Paula," he concluded his reflections aloud, turning toward the queen of his hearth and have done to Mr. Von Glehn's

"Such talk like that is not goot for a lady to speak," he told her.

And Paula actually felt abashed, and could think of no better retort than to tell him not to spend the whole day over a trifling little piece of work. Mr. Lecher replaced his spectacles, examined the bottom of the drawer, opined that it would run smoothly, re-adjusted it in an upright position to replace it, and behold——

From the "worm-eaten" bottom that he had been shaving, a tiny piece of bird shot fell upon the inlaid floor, from which the rugs had been drawn back while he worked. He picked it up gingerly, and held it between his giant thumb and forefinger toward Paula.

"See, lady?" he said. "Vat do I tell you about them vormholes?"

Paula took the tiny, glistening pellet between her fingers. There was a

gleam in her eyes that would have boded ill to Mr. Carter, of London, had he been within reaching distance.

"How much do I owe you?" she in-

to feel, was met by a lady feverish with anxiety and other emotions.

"Harry!" she cried breathlessly, after she had submitted to a marital salute,



heart, "what do you say? Shall we—if it is within our means—repair the damage we set by taking the rest of it?"

quired, with icy anger, and Peter Lecher replied:

"Twenty-five cents, lady. And I leaf you von of my cards."

Which he proceeded to do. And thus ended the first chapter in the fall of the House of Vonglehn.

The second chapter relates how Mr. Henry van Wyck Blaisdell, returning from his Western trip with as much eagerness as he ever permitted himself

and had returned it somewhat peckishly, "Harry, we've been cheated!"

Mr. Blaisdell smiled the superior smile of one who knows that only a very foolhardy rogue would ever try to cheat him.

"I can hardly think that, my dear," he informed her. "What makes you say anything of the sort?"

Paula began to pour forth the story. Her lord frowned at the recital.

"You should never have gone to such a place," he interrupted her at the point where Peter Lecher's basement first appeared in the narrative. "You never know what disease you may contract in such a locality."

Paula said something that sounded like the naughty word for the use of which the old cabinetmaker had rebuked her. But she said it with a prettier air, and brushed away the crime of it with her lips against her husband's thick gray hair.

"You mustn't interrupt," she added to the exclamation and the caress, and she hurried on pell-mell with the story.

Her spouse interrupted once again, despite her warning, to laugh at the idea of an East Side basement cabinetmaker's daring to place his knowledge against that of the House of Vonglehn. But when Paula, in her narrative, reached the bird shot, he frowned thoughtfully and resentfully.

"If there has been trickery," he said, "you may be sure it was practiced without the knowledge or consent of Mr. Vonglehn himself. I shall ask him to call upon me at once. But—one hates to play the suspicious fool! Suspicion is the badge of ignorance. Of course, I am not a cabinetmaker, I am not an expert; that is why I employ an expert, buy my goods from an authority. How absurd to doubt him at the word of a common, little, ignorant man like the one you describe! No—I think we will let the matter rest. There are men who delight to pull down reputations. Especially in the lower classes."

"The shot!" cried Paula, who had not been long out of the classes in which suspicion was inherent, and who thirsted to punish some one, either the Vonglehns for cheating, or old P. Lecher for suggesting such a thing.

Her husband frowned again.

"We'll see," he finally agreed. "We'll speak of this again to-morrow."

Paula, all the Burke and all the South Bend in her up in arms at the thought that she had been hoodwinked, spent a few hours of the ensuing twenty-four in prying into the tiny worm holes of her sideboard with a hatpin.

She had several pieces of shot to show her husband as a result. And then Mr. Blaisdell, with a portentous frown, declared that he would seek an explanation of Mr. Gustav Vonglehn.

Mr. Vonglehn, demanded over the telephone, was reported to be upon the high seas. But his steamer was due to-morrow. Was the matter one to which any one else in the establishment could attend?

Mr. Blaisdell, full of his sense of outraged dignity and of the feeling that he could somehow avenge it by publishing it, said that no one but Mr. Vonglehn could adjust this particular matter, as it involved what seemed to be a piece of sharp practice—to call it by no harsher name—on the part of the London branch. The American branch assured him of its distress, but was loyally sure that there was some mistake; however, Mr. Vonglehn would soon arrive, and the situation was evidently one with which he had better deal personally.

It was two days later that Mr. Vonglehn requested, over the telephone, the privilege of an interview with Mr. Blaisdell. His manner was hurried.

"He is, I suppose, a little upset," said Mr. Blaisdell complacently. "He has probably had some inkling of my displeasure."

But when Mr. Gustav Vonglehn arrived at the Blaisdell house, his perturbation did not seem to be that of an uneasy conscience. He was a handsome man of a blond, tall, delicately articulated type. Paula, who had firmly insisted upon being present at the interview, despite her husband's reluctance, thought him rather handsome; she admired the supple slenderness of his fingers, the gold gleam in his hair and beard, which shone with especial brightness against the tan that his skin had acquired on his ocean voyage. She liked the distinction of his bearing, the cut of his clothes. She came at once to her husband's point of view—if they had been hoodwinked, it was not by this gentleman, not by this citizen of the world, with his admiring, easy air.

When the little group had exchanged

the greetings incumbent upon them, Mr. Vonglehn hurried on.

"But I am really here on business," he said. "Mr. Blaisdell, you are the very first person whom I wanted to see when I landed. I have not even been to my office yet. I am off the dock not an hour. I will explain. You bought a piece from the London gallery this summer?"

"Yes. It was about that——" began Mr. Blaisdell.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Vonglehn, with an accent of relief. "And you have not disposed of it in any way?"

"Disposed of it?" cried Mr. Blaisdell, as if he had been accused of a crime. "How should I dispose of it? I am not a dealer!"

"Good, good! You relieve me of a horrible anxiety that I have had ever since I left London—I feared I might be too late. I feared you might have given the court cupboard away—to the museum, perhaps—to the School of Decorative Design; I remembered that you were one of the patrons. But, thank Heaven, you haven't!"

Paula was gazing at him, almost open-mouthed in her amazement. He had the impulsive spirit of the artist beneath the easy charm of the man of the world, she decided. But he was mysterious. Museum, indeed!

"I should scarcely present to the museum or to the decorative school anything the validity of which——" began Mr. Blaisdell, pompous, but bewildered.

"The situation is this, Mr. Blaisdell," interrupted the art dealer, apparently oblivious to his host's remark. "I want to buy that court cupboard back from you——"

"Ah! Then you know, you have learned——"

Mr. Blaisdell beamed with his approbation of a man who would not permit a fraud to go out from his establishment.

"I do not think that such a blunder was ever made before in our galleries," cried Vonglehn earnestly. "Carter is upset about it—I am enraged. I am going to throw myself completely upon your mercy——"

"Oh, no need of that, Vonglehn," said the friendly Mr. Blaisdell, dropping the formal prefix to the art dealer's name in token of an equality of feeling.

"I am perfectly willing to give you two—three times the price you paid!" Vonglehn went on. "I don't recall what it was—but, whatever it was, I will give you three times as much for it. You doubtless have a memorandum of the transaction—your check, perhaps? Let me give you mine now for——"

"But why on earth, man," cried the puzzled owner of the court cupboard, "should you want to pay me three times as much as I paid you for the piece? I call that pure quixotism!"

"Not a bit of it—it's pure business," asserted the other emphatically. "That piece ought never to have been allowed to leave the gallery alone; the set was to be sold complete—table, chairs, court cupboard, fireplace, dining-hall paneling, and all! We were to have the privilege of going down to Lady Wardour's place in Kent and stripping her dining hall of the woodwork that remained in it—and that fool, Carter—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Blaisdell, but I can't restrain myself—that fool Carter actually let one piece go by itself! There isn't another such set in the world—and my orders were not on any account to break it up! Complete, it is worth—well, you know that there's no placing a limit on the worth of such a set as that—in perfect condition, complete. And that fool, Carter——" He broke off, helpless, before the inadequacies of language to declare the folly of Carter. Then he cheered up. "But I haven't come begging in vain, have I? You will let me have it again? At three times your buying price, though I know that that's a small matter to you."

Paula, hypnotized, convinced, forgetful of birdshot, sent an imploring message to her husband with her eyes. Let him not, for any consideration, surrender the piece upon which Mr. Vonglehn set such a price! It must be genuine—it must be enormously valuable! What a fool she had been to listen to the ravings of that tobacco-laden little old German! She caught

her husband's wavering glance, and shook her head.

"I'm afraid Mrs. Blaisdell would not consent to my doing that, Mr. Vonglehn," he answered, resuming the title, and placing Vonglehn again in the storekeeper class. "But—" he hesitated. "But let us consider for a moment."

He smiled reassuringly toward Paula. He was still enough of a lover to like to cut a dash in his lady's sight. Moreover, if Vonglehn had really been injured by the sale of a single piece from the set, Mr. Blaisdell was of no mind to be, in a sense, in the debt of the art dealer. He prided himself upon the fact that no man ever lost money by any private dealings with him. He was entirely convinced of the truth of Vonglehn's story; he had been skeptical from the first of the opinion of the little cabinetmaker. It did not fit with his idea of his dignity to admit that any one would try to impose upon him. Besides, he was sure that it was never safe to have to do with the lower class of workmen. They were always dissatisfied, and they always vented their dissatisfaction upon the masters of their crafts by base slanders and insinuations.

"Paula," he concluded his reflections aloud, turning, with his most impressive air of grand seigneur, toward the queen of his heart and hearth, "what do you say? Shall we—if it is within our means"—Vonglehn laughed at the joke—"repair the damage we have done Mr. Vonglehn's set by taking the rest of it?"

Paula's brilliant, Irish-blue eyes, dark in their thicket of curling lashes, looked like magnificent stars.

"Oh, Harry!" she cried, forgetting her new rôle of unenthusiastic acceptance of all things as ordinary.

"But," protested Vonglehn, "it was with no such intention that I came here! You make me feel like a sharp salesman—"

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Vonglehn," Blaisdell reassured him. "Mrs. Blaisdell admires the piece greatly; she

would be unwilling to yield it. I think I am right, Paula?"

"Rather!" ejaculated Paula.

"And I am equally unwilling to cause you loss, however unintentionally. Besides, your Mr. Carter was, I think, right in telling us that we would find nothing suitable for using with our court cupboard except the chairs and tables that had always been used with it. Shall we consider the matter settled?"

"Your splendid attitude leaves me no chance to refuse," answered the admiring Vonglehn, with the air of one who could appreciate magnificent humanity as well as magnificent art. "I had promised to do my best for the Prince of—no matter! The set is yours, Mr. Blaisdell—with the paneling and the fireplace, of course?"

"Of course," assented the lordly gentleman.

Paula made an ecstatic little noise in her throat.

"Since you have been so generous—so regally generous," Mr. Vonglehn went on, "we must carry out the transaction on the basis on which you bought the cupboard. That piece was six thousand, I think?"

He seemed to have recovered his memory of terms.

Mr. Blaisdell admitted that the cupboard had cost six thousand dollars, and the bargain for the rest of Lady Wardour's dining room was agreeably struck. And the second chapter in the fall of the House of Vonglehn was written, although Mr. Vonglehn had so little premonition of the fact that he smiled as he descended the steps of the Blaisdell dwelling, and laughed aloud when he was seated in the comparative seclusion of his taxi.

"Did you pacify him?" asked his nephew, who was employed in a confidential capacity in the New York house, when Gustav had entered his private office.

"Yes," said Gustav indifferently, bending over his papers, and looking commendably grave. "I have even sold him the rest of the outfit."

"What!" cried the young man explosively.

Then, as his uncle looked at him with cold inquiry, he threw his head back, and roared with laughter.

"Uncle Gus, you're a marvel, a marvel!" he shouted, and at the sincerity of his youthful enthusiasm, Gustav allowed a smile to reappear upon his handsome countenance.

Meantime Sunday had come and gone. Old Peter Lecher had scrubbed himself, and shaved himself, and clipped himself into his usual state of Sabbath cleanliness, had donned his shabby best suit of clothes, had tied beneath his chin the black-and-orange knitted cravat that his granddaughter had made him, and ambled down to his friend, Mark Cotrelly's.

Mark lived in an out-of-the-way region, lodging on the top floor of one of an old-fashioned row of houses, set back in old-fashioned grassy yards, with balconies before each line of windows, and a general effect of belonging somewhere else

than in New York. He had two rooms, a big one and a little one opening off it, and they were cheerful and homelike, with books and a hearth fire and a table on which a smoker could find what he wanted without too much search.

Old Peter, according to custom, seated himself in the armchair reserved



Peter held aloft a sheet on which was reproduced a group of photographs. "Friends of yours?" asked Mark

for his use, beamed comfortable approval on the room and its inhabitant, puffed away at his pipe, and said nothing much for a long time.

Mark, who was used to his silence and to his easy habit of finding his own entertainment, pushed a sheaf of Sunday papers toward him, and went on with what he himself was doing—which, to be exact, was modeling little pieces of clay at a worktable drawn up before one of the long French windows.

Peter rustled the papers and looked at the pictures. Finally he broke into a cheerful chuckle. Mark looked up, and Peter held aloft a sheet on which was reproduced a group of photographs. "Society Hostesses of the Coming Season," was the caption beneath them.

"Friends of yours?" asked Mark, smiling when he had looked idly at the group.

Peter chuckled again, and pointed to one that bore a secondary caption.

"Mrs. Henry van Wyck Blaisdell," he read. "I go to her house the other day to do her a job. She is much more handsome looking than this. But I guess she ain't much a lady, *hein?* She used a word—I would haf vashed Gretchen out by the mouth mit soap if I heard her use such a word!"

"How did you come to drive Mrs. Blaisdell to swearing?" asked Mark, laughing. "Or was it some one else?"

"It vas me vat did it. I tell her the truth—and she svars!"

"It's never safe to tell any one the truth if you want the conversation to proceed gracefully," said Mark, with good-natured cynicism. "What particular form of truth did you hand out to Mrs. Blaisdell? I fancy there are two or three facts in her interesting career of which she would rather not be reminded."

"Pouf! I know nothing about her. I care nothing about her. I tell no lady anything about herself, ever—she vill know more than I know about herself, anyway. But she lose the temper like a big child ven I tell her the cupboard she bought in London for six thousand dollar—six thousand dollar, Mark! It

is a joke!—ven I tell her it is no more an antique than your card table there."

He nodded toward the green, felt-covered table folded against Mark's wall. Mark laid down his ball of clay.

"Tell me about it," he suggested, reaching toward the tobacco jar and filling his pipe, that he might listen in comfort.

And as the old man went on, Mark's eyes, veiled in a thin cloud of tobacco smoke, began to gleam and glitter. He listened with deep attention. From time to time he asked a question.

"You're certain it was not a genuine old piece?" he demanded sharply at the close of old Peter's narration.

Peter blew a great cloud of smoke from his lungs.

"My boy," he said, "I'm sixty-eight *yahr* old; I vas apprentice to a cabinet-maker in the old country ven I vas fourteen; I haf made furniture all my life. Of course I am certain. I do not say a thing is so ven I am not certain."

Mark nodded thoughtfully. By and by he got out the rye bread, the cheese, and the beer with which he was accustomed to regale Peter, and only once again did he refer to the profane heroine of the old German's tale. That was when he asked Peter of whom Mrs. Blaisdell had bought the cupboard.

The next morning Mark was closeted with the surveyor for an hour.

"It's a deuced disagreeable situation," said that gentleman, after they had talked a long time. "Suppose your old man is right—suppose the piece is a modern piece, and that the Vonglehns have sold it and shipped it as an antique, thereby escaping the payment of forty-per-cent duty. The thing got by us at the time, it is set up now in a private residence; we should have to get authority to invade that residence and search it for contraband goods—and the whole thing, even if we should prove our point, would net the treasury only two hundred and fifty or three hundred dollars, or thereabouts. Blaisdell is a prominent man, though that is thanks to his fortune and to nothing else! But it's a deuce of a job to harass prominent men whatever the ground of

their prominence. And the Vonglehn house has been regarded as above suspicion. Besides—our inspector let it get by once—”

“But you don’t suppose, sir, that if Vonglehn has mulcted the Blaisdells of over five thousand dollars, and cheated the treasury out of a few hundreds, it’s the first time—or that it will be the last?”

“They’re a rich firm, and they have a standing,” persisted the surveyor. “Though, of course, that isn’t conclusive. But it means something. There is no record of any trouble with them for several administrations back—I looked over the history of the last six or eight when I took office. If they have been smuggling, they’ve been mighty clever about it.”

“Or the department was very lax,” suggested Mark.

“Of course, the department was very lax during several administrations,” admitted the surveyor. “Well, suppose we warn the collector’s department to be on the lookout against false invoices and undervaluations. They are more likely, I think, to work in that way than through out-and-out smuggling. Granting, I mean, that they are up to mischief at all!”

Then he turned and dictated a note to the collector, stating that it “had come to his notice,” and so forth, and going on through technical phrases down to the suggestion that it would be an excellent idea to pay particular attention to the invoicing and valuation of goods consigned to Vonglehn, of New York, by Vonglehn, of Paris or London.

And meantime, whenever Mr. Gustav Vonglehn’s young nephew caught his uncle’s eye, he glowed with the sympathetic admiration of youth—and almost winked.

For a few weeks vigilance brought no reward. The importations of the Vonglehns, though subjected now to a more thorough scrutiny than hitherto, were not heavy; their invoices contained no errors not easily ascribable to clerical error and to haste. And then, when Mark Cotrelly’s hopes of a

splendid capture were dwindling, one pleasant winter day there was unloaded from the Cunarder just in a set of antique furniture, consisting of table, chairs, wall paneling, and fireplace, consigned by the London house to the New York one. With these came a Queen Anne tallboy of walnut.

The energetic young Mr. Marcus Vonglehn Pope, nephew of Gustav, well known at the customhouse as the customs agent of the New York art firm, had appeared even more promptly than usual, with his invoices and with the papers authenticating the furniture as antique. For, as authentic antiques, the pieces came in free of duty. As authentic antiques, also, so the customhouse officials noted on the invoices, the price paid for the furniture was far in excess of what would have been paid for modern cabinetwork of the same effect.

Mr. Pope was always in a hurry to claim his consignments, and to-day he was in more of a hurry than usual. He explained that the furniture was already sold to Henry van Wyck Blaisdell, the millionaire, and was to be set up in a new palace that he had recently taken for himself on Long Island. There was to be a great Christmas party there, according to Mr. Pope’s information, and his life would not be worth living until he got the stuff delivered. Whereupon, Mr. Pope was assigned Mark Cotrelly as inspector, and they proceeded to the dock. So expeditious always was the young customs agent that it was practically an unknown thing for Vonglehn’s importations to be sent to the bonded warehouse for its examination.

“Never could see the use in paying warehouse charges,” Mr. Pope was accustomed to say. So his briskness to-day was in nowise remarkable.

Ordinarily, in the young man’s experience, the procedure of inspection at the pier was simple. Enough of the furniture would be uncrated and examined to convince the inspector that the goods were what the invoice claimed them to be; then all the crates would be marked for release, and Mr. Pope would summon his carters, and

the stuff would be removed with expedition. In the case of a house with the reputation of the Vonglehn's, with a long history of honorable dealing behind it, nothing more was necessary. Consequently, when Mark had seen the table and a portion of the paneling, Mr. Pope suggested that perhaps he had seen enough. But, to his astonishment, Mark had decided to uncrate everything.

"What's up?" demanded Pope briefly.

"More painstaking era," replied Mark imperturbably, commanding the ripping open of another case.

"For the love of Mike, man, what do you want?" Young Pope was breezy and vigorous in style. "What's your pipe dream? What is it you're suspicious of? The antiquity of the pieces? Want to see the authentication? It satisfied them down in the customs office. But maybe you're an expert."

"Nope," replied Mark. "But I may decide that we need one to examine these pieces."

"The historical authentication, the record here, isn't good enough for you?"

Young Pope was openly contemptuous of the inspector.

Mark laughed.

"Did you never hear of such a thing as a forged record?" he asked cheerfully. "Did you never hear of such a dirty trick as sending a true historical record with a faked set of furniture?"

"Vonglehn's doesn't do that sort of business, as of course you know well enough. But I suppose this is a form of blackmail. Well, I'm in a hurry. What's your figure?"

It is sometimes a fault of young men in a hurry to offer unnecessary insult. Still, there was this excuse for the agent of the Vonglehn galleries—he had known many inspectors.

"Don't be offensive," Mark commanded him curtly, looking closely at the beautiful walnut tallboy. He tried one of the drawers. It was locked. "Have you the key?" he said to young Pope.

It seemed to him that a slight look of embarrassment passed over features

that, a second before, had been adjusted to an expression of angry, scornful impatience. The young man, however, produced the key. Mark opened the drawers from the bottom up. Each slid out easily, and revealed emptiness within. Young Pope's features were relaxing when the top drawer refused to obey the key, which stuck fast in the keyhole.

"This seems to be a different lock," commented Mark. "Have you a key for it?"

"Oh, that's impossible. There was only one key sent over. If the lock won't work, it must be broken. Anyway, those old locks are always out of order."

Mark continued his turning and twisting, but to no avail. His young face grew set and hard.

"We'll have to pry it open," he announced.

"Why don't you smash it in and be done with it?" shouted young Pope. "Smash it in—it's only a historical piece worth three thousand dollars! Smash it, by all means! Gad! When I think of the brutal, butcherly insolence to which the people of this country submit—gad, I'm speechless!"

"Not quite," commented Mark. "However, don't worry. I shan't do more than a few hundred dollars' worth of damage. And if, as you suggest, the lock is broken and that is the reason why the key doesn't work, of course, you'd have to force it yourselves, if I didn't. But I'm going to."

He suited action to the word, standing upon a box and pounding a cold chisel into the aperture between the top of the chest and the top drawer. In an instant the lock yielded to his assault, and he drew out a packed drawer. He studied the lock; it was modern, and unlike those of the lower drawers. He lifted his eyes from it to the discomfited face of the young man standing beside him, and his own bore a look of triumph and relief. The office had not had much sympathy with his suspicions of the House of Vonglehn, and had warned him not to be too offensive in his dealings with it.



"By Jove! What do you suppose that means?" cried young Mr. Pope, with a prompt and commendable air of bewilderment.

"By Jove! What do you suppose that means?" cried young Mr. Pope, with a prompt and commendable air of bewilderment.

"We shall see," replied Mark.

He lifted out a bundle of exquisite thread lace—yards upon yards. He gingerly handled two beautiful Sèvres vases wrapped in layer after layer of cotton wool. He unfolded two delicate, painted chicken-skin fans. And finally, beneath all these, he exposed to view five unframed canvases, the work of well-known modern French and German painters.

"Are these things declared?" he asked.

"It's some asinine mistake," said Mr. Pope, vigorously assured. "I know no more about that stuff than you do. No, it isn't on the invoice."

"We'll send the goods to the public stores."

Mark's manner was impartial, indifferent. But his eyes were dancing.

"You mean this undeclared stuff? All right. But you're releasing the rest, of course. I'll send my carters——"

"I'm ordering it all to the stores,"

said Mark. "I'm in need of an expert opinion on the antiques."

On the pleasant features of Mr. Marcus Vonglehn Pope an expression of animosity grew. If hatred is to be conveyed by a mere glance, he achieved its expression. But he said no more; he shrugged his shoulders, submitted to the tyranny of the inevitable, and left the dock, while Mark ordered the furniture into the public stores.

Now, it so chanced that the public stores were somewhat crowded at this particular time. Unusual activity either upon the part of the department in unearthing things that needed investigation, or on the part of the importing community with a practical way of expressing its objections to the tariff, had sent many vanloads of goods to the place of detention and examination. The work of the appraisers was behind, so much had they had to do. Consequently, not all the powerful influence of the Vonglehn establishment could secure either the immediate release of its furniture or its immediate reappraisal. The little matter of the drawer filled with undeclared goods, Mr. Gus-

tav Vonglehn himself took the trouble to come down and explain to the surveyor, whom he greeted as one man of the world greets another, and not at all as a hangdog criminal greets his judge.

"I was at a total loss to understand the matter, when Mr. Pope reported it to me," he said, with his air of cordial candor. "I cabled at once, and here is the reply. I instructed the London office not to use our code, you see; I wanted not only to understand the matter myself, but to have it perfectly intelligible to you also."

He laid before the surveyor the cable message from the London gallery.

Had been using the tallboy as a storage place for small articles during changes in the upper balcony. Must have forgotten to clear top drawer before shipping. Regret accident. Rejoice at recovery of goods, all of which had been sold here and were awaiting delivery. Reship at once. Particularly glad of this outcome; we had been fearing theft, and all staff was restive under unavoidable suspicions.

CARTER.

"I see, I see," said the surveyor.

But he said it a little uneasily. Mark had reported the strange inability of the key to unlock the drawer in which these things were stored "by accident." Still, there were such things in the world as perfectly innocent coincidences. And to accuse the Vonglehns of dishonesty was difficult.

"So that as soon as you can release us those goods, we'll have them consigned direct to London from the public stores," said Gustav easily. "But now, Mr. Surveyor, about this furniture. Can nothing be done to facilitate its release? My client, Mr. Blaisdell, and his pretty, new wife are after me every day. If it would help things at all, I should even be willing to pay a duty on the furniture, genuine and authenticated as it is, on its valuation as modern."

He paused hopefully.

"Things will have to take the regular course now, Mr. Vonglehn," replied the surveyor. "I'm sorry to embarrass you, but there's nothing to do but to put the matter through the customary form."

"Well," quoth Gustav, rising, disappointed but reasonable, "so it must be. My hot-headed young nephew, Marcus

Pope, is all for battle, murder, sudden death, and suits for damages. But when he is older, he'll learn that violence goes a very short distance. And when he has been in the art-importation business in America a while longer, he'll know that young men are ambitious for distinction in the customs service, and are anxious to make their reputations as sleuths of smuggled goods—and that he has to pay the penalty! Good day, Mr. Surveyor. You'll do your best for me, of course."

But the surveyor's best was not so expeditious that the Elizabethan furniture had been released and the status of the drawer of undeclared goods established before the arrival of the French liner at the end of the week. When it came in, Gustav and his nephew had a discussion.

"Much better to let our *La Lorraine* stuff go into the bonded warehouse and wait the blowing over of this affair before its examination," said Gustav, the cautious and reasonable.

"I've never let a consignment go into bond since I've had the receiving of goods," declared the younger man. "If we do anything out of the ordinary now, we're doomed—I tell you we're doomed. They'll be watching us. That Cotrelly chap has eyes like a ferret."

Gustav considered. Then he sighed.

"Well, have your own way," he said. "But it's either a damned strange breed of inspectors they've got now, or you're blamed stupid, if you can't make a dicker with them."

"I wish I could have old Halsey back," sighed Mr. Pope. "He was a reasonable beggar. But he got caught in the oil-and-cheese frauds. He's doing his time! Well, I'll do my best."

As the beginning of his best, he particularly requested that Mr. Mark Cotrelly should not be assigned to him for examination of goods. He said that Mr. Cotrelly was unnecessarily offensive in the discharge of his duties. Accordingly, he was assigned Mr. Deering.

Mr. Deering was a little, wiry, grayish man, who was growing old in the service of the customs department. He

and Mr. Pope had never happened to meet before, which is perhaps the reason that Mr. Pope thought well of offering him a covert bribe, ignorant of the fact that even during the darkest days of collusion in fraud between certain importers and certain inspectors, Deering had been known as "Honest Jim."

Mr. Pope's suggestion bore anything but the fruit that he desired. It enraged the little man, who was proud—even vain—of his distinction, and who resented it that every importer did not know his title and its justification. And his examination of the invoice of French furniture of the period of Louis Quinze was more searching than usual. He found, in his relentless search of every part of every article, two locked drawers, which the key supplied to him would not unlock. The customary excuse: "Those old locks always stick," did not, as of old, suffice. He forced the locks, and found that the two drawers were filled with undeclared treasures of small size—small, unframed paintings, laces, fans, bits of cabinet china, some ancient Dutch silver, some wonderful Russian icons.

Deering's report as to undeclared French goods, following within three days upon that of Mark Cotrelly, justified a new attitude toward the House of Vonglehn.

The expert's declaration that all the "antique" furniture was a clever forgery was followed by the obtaining of an affidavit from Lady Wardour to the effect that while she had, indeed, sold the contents of her genuinely Elizabethan dining room to the London gallery of Vonglehn, and had given the papers authenticating its history, all this had happened eight years before, and that the furniture, to the best of her knowledge and belief, had been at once sold to Mr. Simeon Schwartz, late of Cape Town, Africa, but now of a splendid palace in Hants. The New York books of the Vonglehns were seized,

and they revealed enough fraudulent importation, even during the comparatively brief time to which the statute of limitations did not apply, to render the firm liable to suits for nearly three-quarters of a million dollars.

Mr. Vonglehn sailed—under bail—for Europe, avowing his proud intention of returning and convincing the world of the outrageous injustice of the charges made against him. He settled the treasury's claim against him, however, out of court, before the time for the suit was set, and he forfeited his bail when that time came, like any common swindler, except that he is supposed to have indemnified his bondsman. Whereat many Spartan citizens wanted to know why the government did not scour all the countries of Europe for him, extradition or no extradition treaties, and drag him home for trial, conviction, and punishment. Mr. Blaisdell was one of the most eloquent of these.

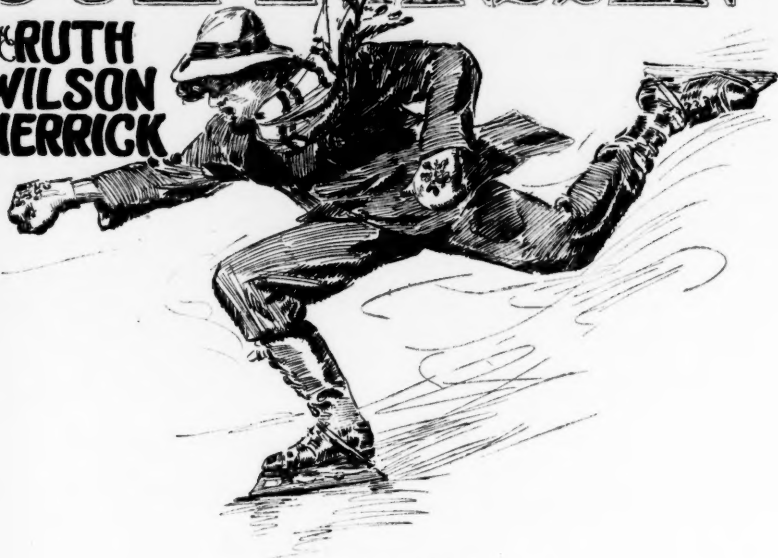
Meantime, the ten or twelve owners of Lady Wardour's wonderful set of Elizabethan dining-hall furniture often look with brooding eyes upon the forged documents authenticating their treasures. And all the rich men whose walls are hung with paintings purchased at Vonglehn's are given to studying the signatures of those paintings dubiously, and shaking their heads.

Meantime, Gustav Vonglehn lives *en prince* in St. Petersburg, in Paris, in London, in Vienna, in half a dozen brilliant and beautiful European cities. He will never again, so he says bitterly, set foot upon the ungrateful, barbarian shores of America, where art is no more regarded sacred than pig iron. And on a certain decorous side street uptown there is a new art establishment, known as the Marcus Pope Gallery. It is said to have many most fortunate European affiliations, and its proprietor is reputed to have enjoyed wonderful opportunities of learning his profession—or his art—during his youth.

"From the Palace of His Ancestors," the fifth of this series of stories of up-to-date smugglers that Virginia Middleton has written for SMITH'S, will appear in the March number.

JUL HANSSEN

by **RUTH
WILSON
HERRICK**



ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU

JUL HANSSEN had not been "over" long enough to acquire any perceptible degree of American nonchalance. His feet still mixed with each other at every step, and his mammoth red hands and wrists dangled below his coat sleeves. He was a big fellow, too, but the hair that crowned his six feet of stalwart body like a thick, unmanageable, yellow haystack, looked comical enough; his jaw still dropped, and his eyes, blue-gray like the Norwegian sky, still opened in wonder alike at the giant auto trucks that thudded their way down Halsted Street, and at the intricacies of the "buns" and "psyches" that the girls matted down under the nets and hairpins on their pert little heads.

Down in Klein's Emporium, where he worked selling cheap shoes to the Bohemian women in their dull-gray shawls,

or to the red-and-yellow Italians, there was a force of clerks and salesgirls who made life for him a daily torture. Most of the boys belonged to a gang that ran around together evenings, known to the neighborhood as "that there bunch of Irish roughnecks," hated fiercely and feared with good cause by the other gangs of Bohemian or Polish boys. Mike MacNamara was their leader. He ran Klein's cagelike delivery wagon, and had the reputation of being able to "hang one on the chin" of any fellow in the community. As yet, he had hung none on Jul Hanssen's, although he had not been niggardly in offering Jul opportunities to "take him on." Jul was slow to anger, and, besides, he had had his difficulties in securing the one job that he now possessed.

They plagued him in a hundred detestable ways. The girls, resenting his

open and scandalized aversion to their rather careless code of conduct, had a maddening way of chucking him under the chin as they passed, and then of laughing at the prompt suffusion of red in his cheeks. The boys geyed him about everything imaginable—about the huge arctics in which he mummified his enormous feet on the first cold day, about his stiffness with the girls, about the combinations that he produced with Norwegian English and Halsted Street slang. He was, to use their own jargon, the official "goat" at Klein's Emporium, and against each new stunt Jul butted his stupid yellow head faithfully,

to the usual accompaniment of guffaws and giggles.

But—to alter his zoölogy for a moment—the worm turned. It was a glorious, cold morning in January, and the creaking snow under the wagon wheels made Jul homesick. He had walked rapidly down Twentieth Street from his cheap rooming house, and was warm and tingling from the quantities of bracing air that he had breathed in and out of his capacious lungs. The atmosphere at Klein's was sure to be warm, and moist, and unwholesome, like the air in the nickel theater last night into which he had wandered lone-



They plagued him in a hundred detestable ways.

somely to kill another irksome evening. Quite suddenly he felt that he would give his life for a sight of the old brown farmhouse lying in the white valley among the towering Norwegian mountains, tucked down there into the edge of the fir grove. That was home! And this unfriendly, alien city of Chicago—with what sickening disgust he hated it!

He darted across the seething street, narrowly missing a truck loaded with beer barrels, and stopped short an instant on the corner. Could he bear to go in? Then he ground down a resolute hand over the big brass latch on Klein's door and shook it open.

MacNamara, pushing the sliding ladder back and forth with his foot, was holding court at the back of the store.

"Say, we was just talking about you," he called out. "Can you skate?"

A tiny spark seemed to flash momentarily in Jul's eyes, and then disappear, like a star that flickers and fades in the blue-gray of the sky.

He unwound a long scarf from about his neck, and drew off thick, shapeless mittens, before he answered.

"No," he drawled slowly, with a clumsy attempt at humor. "I bane walk, I bane run, I bane yump, but skate—no, I cannot be on to that yet."

"Well, say! Come on out to-night and we'll put you through. Are you on? Wanda here, she'll teach you. Won't you, Wanda?"

Wanda Jelinek was another sore point with Jul, as MacNamara had been clever enough to discover. She was not like the other girls in the store. She wore her crown of glory in a soft, dusky halo about her face, so that it looked like real hair, and her cheeks were red, not rougey pink. Also, the dark Bohemian eyes, for all they were so tender and soft, could light dangerously, and served to keep even the great MacNamara in his place. He adopted an air of easy proprietorship over Wanda that filled Jul with an unreasoning anger. It was so simple a matter for Mike MacNamara to make friends with girls. Jul would have given his right hand to know how to ask Wanda to the "movies" with him, but the making of

"dates" was not among his accomplishments.

"So!" replied Jul stupidly to Mike's magnanimous offer. "But I bane bigger still than she. But sure, I learn. You skate on the river, yes?"

"Naw, there ain't never no skatin' on the river." MacNamara's big thumb assisted his explanation as he continued. "You goes down here four blocks till you comes to a big brick building with an iron fence around a sort of—yard. See! That there's a park. Well, the other side of that building's the ball park they floods in the winter fer to skate on. Now you be there at seven bells. Get me? We'll put you next to some real skating. Leave it to us!"

It was the first time, although he had lived so near, that Jul had ever heard of the park. It was one of the West Side municipal playgrounds, boasting the usual field house and outdoor accessories, and patronized by a large number of people of different nationalities. Of late the managers had been confronted by a serious problem. The Irish element had grown to such proportions that it was crowding out all others. Mike MacNamara and his "gang" had almost usurped the gymnasium and the basket-ball teams, were acknowledged as the champion wrestlers, and had filled the present list of applicants for the hockey teams so full of O'Flarities and Flynns that no lone Stedronisky, or Pflugel, or Giovenco dared register his alien name alongside. Whereupon, although he was unaware of his service, Jul Hanssen skated in at the critical juncture like the unknown champion on prancing steed at some medieval jousting tournament.

As ordered, he arrived promptly at seven o'clock, and his eyes, as he caught first sight of the flying forms on the white ice, were like those of a fractious colt who sights a stretch of level, clear road ahead. The night was wintry, and cold, and glorious. The stars sparkled white like full-carat diamonds, a rosy, adolescent moon rode atilt on the precipitous edge of an airy cloud, and the music of the skates thrilled its way into Jul Hanssen's Norwegian blood.



He skated over and held out his hands without a word.

A thick hand clapped him over his collar bone.

"Gee, don't it listen good? Well, what d'ye know?"

It was MacNamara, who, leading his flock, had come up to the wooden platform built around the "warming house."

Jul turned quietly.

"It bane bully, but no! I shall not go so fast? I fall down maybe."

A roar of laughter greeted this timorous confession.

"You should worry," jeered Mac-

Namara. "We'll pick him up," in his most soothing tones.

"You have skates, yes?"

"Sure!" Mike produced an extra pair. "Now sit down on this here bench, and I'll show you how they goes on. See? Like this."

Jul sat and took his instruction meekly. And when he rose again, it was to wobble ludicrously about, with his arms waving in futile attempts to establish an equilibrium, and his ankles turning weakly at each step, so that he resem-

bled nothing so much as an overgrown elephant trying to balance itself on a rolling ball. A crowd collected around him and joined in the sport.

"Voilà! Voilà!" mimicked a little French girl, skating around him tauntingly. "See! Like a bird he goes! Oy-Oy-Oy-Oy! In great circles like a bird, like a bird! *C'est superbe!*"

"Skate on yer heels a'ready, mister," shouted a helpful little Bohemian lad who had but recently achieved that difficult art himself, and was eager to pass on his knowledge.

"Gee! Stand up straighter, Jul," Wanda managed to whisper. "An' don't go curvin' over like a buttonhook. That there ain't no way."

"Sure, that's the idea," chimed in Mike, who had caught the whisper. "Leave it to Wanda to give Jul the straight tip. Watch me now, Jul. Watch me!"

Jul watched, and then a great light broke on his hitherto expressionless face.

"O-O-Oh!" he said. "I tank I see now. Yust like this, yes?"

And swift and graceful as an arrow from a bow, he shot out to the center of the ice, balanced there an instant, and then, crossing his arms, swung around and around on one leg like a spinning top. A lunge! And he was skating in a great circle, lying flat down on one side so low that he swept the ice with his right arm. A hop! And running, he stood on one leg, skating backward and forward, and there were the initials, "J. H.," sparkling on the ice. Then he straightened, looked to the east, and, in furious, fleet strokes, was down at the end of the pond, his tremendous body skimming the ice as lightly as a swallow.

"Oy-Oy-Oy-Oy!" shrieked the little French girl again, clasping her hands. "*C'est vrai!* Like a bird! Like a bird! See how he goes, like a bird!"

Back he came over the ice, slower and slower, until he reached the breathless group at the warming house, and, stopping himself with a final pirouette, stood before them—breathing as easily as if he had merely walked across the

floor at Klein's to open the door for a customer.

"Your skates bane dull," he said to MacNamara. "I tank there be a great many of nicks in the edges maybe."

If the gymnasium teacher, so he said afterward, had not been there to see it himself, he never would have believed it of Mike MacNamara. The big Irish lad, breaking a tense hush, walked over to Jul Hanssen and held out his hand. Jul shoved his in front of him also, and they shook silently.

Then Mike brought the gymnasium instructor over to Jul and said:

"We wants this here fellow on our hockey team. And his name heads the whole, bloomin' list. See!"

Thus it was that the backbone of the famous Irish gang was broken, and thus it was that the sprawling letters, "Jul Hanssen," stood over those of the mighty "Michael MacNamara" on the hockey list.

Jul swung out onto the ice again, and his eyes swept the pond until he spied a slim, girlish figure skating by herself along the edge. He skated over and held out his hands without a word.

Wanda looked up into his face.

"Gee! I thought I'd split," she said. "It was the funniest thing I ever seen, his expression."

And she broke out into peal after peal of jolly, girlish laughter that went to Jul's lonely heart like the first quiver of the violin strings to the hungry heart of a music lover at the first fall orchestra concert.

"You certainly slipped one over!"

And a sense of complete understanding seemed to come with the words.

Jul said nothing, just held out his great, warm, mittened hands to her. She slipped her small ones into his, and together they swung down the ice in long, steady, rhythmic strokes. Jul drew a long breath and felt suddenly that he could love this good old town of Chicago, after all. He looked up, up over the lights of the city playground, and it seemed to him that even the stars were twinkling at him, like the eyes of friends, up in the wintry American sky.



ROWENA'S RELATIONS

by Helen Callaway

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

JIMMIE HOLT, reaching home one afternoon an hour earlier than usual, was attracted by the murmur of feminine voices to the drawing-room. He was a social soul, also a trifle near-sighted, so he entirely missed the shadow of annoyance in Rowena's eye as she looked up and saw him in the door. Neither did he grasp the fact that she hesitated a moment, as if in hopes that he would discreetly disappear, before she presented him in a flat tone of voice to "my cousins, Mrs. Wright and Miss Porter."

Jimmie dimly remembered that his wife had some poor relations living in obscurity somewhere, and her guests, who were frankly shabby in suits and hats that were vaguely reminiscent, seemed to answer that description. But he knew so little about them that he was both embarrassed and touched when they immediately chorused in lovely Southern voices an amazing amount of delight at at last meeting "Cousin James."

He thought them charming. The elder one, who explained that she was his Cousin Sallie, was about as much under forty as Rowena; but, unlike the latter, who played indoor tennis when outdoor golf was impracticable, she was stoutish. It was still evident, however, that she had once been a beauty. The younger one, who was not over twenty, was deliciously pretty in a pink-and-white and red-haired way. She had dimples; also an infectious Southern

giggle. And she, it seemed, was his Cousin Georgie May.

They were ingeniously chatty, and Jimmie learned in a very short time that they were half sisters; that their father, the colonel, was a darling; that there were several younger children who were also darlings; that Mrs. Wright was a widow; and that they all lived together in a dilapidated old house in a little hole of a place in Georgia, called Bernardstown.

Mrs. Wright gave a touching explanation of their incongruous presence so far from home.

"I suppose it was sort of reckless," she acknowledged, with a winning smile. "But I had a little money saved up, and Georgie May had never been out of Bernardstown. Georgie May's my ewe lamb, you see. She's just as sweet as she is pretty," she went on, in lowered voice, as her young sister drifted to the other end of the room to look at a picture. "Every boy in Bernardstown wants to marry her. I never know when she's going to settle down for life, and it did seem a pity to have her do it before she'd had even one little trip. And I did want her to see New York. When I came to think about it, I discovered I kind o' wanted to see New York again myself." She gave her fat, slow, pretty laugh at this, but the next moment she turned toward Rowena with tears in her eyes. "I hadn't been to Jack's grave for fifteen years."



"I thought perhaps she could pay us a little visit," he finished hastily.

"Is it as long as that since you've been North?" asked Rowena hastily. "Mrs. Wright's husband was a New Yorker, you know," she explained to Jimmie. "She was married from mother's house."

She looked at him very hard, as if she might be trying to hypnotize him into remembering something.

She was so far successful that there came vaguely back to him the story of a beautiful cousin who had captivated and married, while on a visit North, a

young man of extraordinary promise, and a not less extraordinary income. He remembered quite clearly the pathetic sequel; the young man dying after a brief illness, and—what had seemed almost as great a catastrophe to the practical Rowena—the subsequent refusal of his father to continue the income to the widow. Jimmie renewed his desire to "punch" the old gentleman into decency. His blue eyes twinkled sympathetically through his glasses.

"You must find a very different New

York from the one you left," he ventured, for lack of a more appropriate remark.

Mrs. Wright, looking little enough like the heroine of a romance, acknowledged sadly that she had. It was almost as new to her as it was to Georgie May.

"We haven't seen half the sights yet," she sighed. "And we have to go back South to-morrow."

Rowena gave her a sharp look, and Jimmie made an incredulous and sympathetic remark. Mrs. Wright explained that unfortunately it was necessary. Her father had sent for her. Something had come up in connection with an old piece of property and an encroaching railroad. He was very old, and, as Rowena knew, he had never been much of a business man. But it was a great disappointment. They had reckoned to stay at least two weeks. She didn't mind for herself, but it was such a pity for Georgie May.

"Can't she stay on without you for a few days?" asked Jimmie, quite unconscious of his wife's tensely warning eye.

"She couldn't stay in a boarding house alone," said Mrs. Wright, in a tone of gentle reproof.

He replied in some embarrassment that of course he realized that.

"I thought perhaps she could pay us a little visit," he finished hastily.

He was not in the habit of issuing invitations without consulting his wife, and it appeared from Rowena's expression that he had chosen the wrong occasion to begin. But the cousins, apparently unconscious of a discordant note, were both exclaiming "how perfectly lovely" that would be. Rowena, however, after an awkward moment, was afraid that it would be dull for a young girl.

"There's nothing going on in town this time of year," she explained. "And I'm so busy getting ready to go to the country. We're leaving in a week, you see."

Jimmie knew it to be at least two, but he was more horrified by her manner than by her fibs. He was much

surprised when Georgie May, apparently impervious to hints, cried:

"Oh, Cousin Rowena, just lookin' out of the window is excitin' enough for me—after Bernardstown."

She finished with a tremulous little giggle that would have melted a stone. But Rowena responded only with the weary ghost of a smile, and the remark that she would send the car for her at three the next day. As the door closed on their effusive good-bys, she turned on her husband with an exasperated:

"Oh, Jimmie!"

"I'm really very sorry if I put my foot in it, Rowena," he apologized. "She seems to be a nice little girl; nothing about her to be ashamed of. Everybody has poor relations."

"Jimmie!" she cried, with an indignant flush. "You know I'm not a snob. But they never know when to go home. You might as well have adopted her on the spot. I tried so hard to make you remember what I'd told you about them. Mother had to close the house and go abroad one year to get rid of the colonel, and Sallie used to think nothing of coming North for a 'little visit' and staying six months. Poor mother had great 'family feeling,' but I haven't—not, at any rate, one that embraces second cousins. I've always vowed they shouldn't visit *me*."

She gave him a fiercely reproachful look, but he preserved a discreet silence.

"It's hard to get ahead of Sallie," she resumed. "She's been writing me very effusive letters lately about this young sister with the ridiculous name, but I didn't dream that, finding hints unavailing, she'd actually bring her North. That story about the railroad and the land was very well done."

"My dear Rowena!"

"Oh, she doesn't mind a few fibs when she's once made up her mind. Mother married *her* off, trousseau and all, and she sees no reason, I suppose, why we shouldn't perform the same service for Georgie May—with happier results. I'm afraid she's going to have an awful shock." Rowena looked as if



*Her eyes followed Georgie May and her suitor until her head ached, and
poor taste for Rowena*



*a catty Highburian observed to a companion chaperon that it was in
to gloat so publicly*

she might even have bombs in mind. "I could shake you, Jimmie!"

"My dear girl," ventured her husband, "I don't really see that there is anything to get excited about. Miss Georgie May couldn't be coming at a better time. Our departure for the country very neatly terminates her visit."

"Oh, does it, my poor boy? It never used to terminate Sallie's——"

"Well," he responded, with some irritation, "it will in this case. Just tell her you haven't a guest room."

This sounded like good common sense, but not a bit like the philanthropic Jimmie. Rowena had to smile a little at his obvious effort to rehabilitate himself in her good graces.

"I'll let you do it. You invited her," she said rather cruelly.

But Rowena was at bottom a "good sport," and when Jimmie, in some trepidation, reached home the next evening, he found her in an almost humorous state of mind.

"Your cousin has arrived," she announced. "Elise is unpacking for her. Also mending, I imagine. They never take care of their clothes. Sallie never did. She has been talking my head off, and has seen my entire wardrobe. She's rather an amusing little thing," she added magnanimously.

During the days that followed, he was relieved, if not altogether surprised, to find her very gracefully making the best of his bad break. She arranged for theaters, and was even reckless enough to call up a couple of bachelors. She went still further.

"I never did reckon to have a real Paris frock, firsthand," observed Georgie May one evening, frankly admiring herself in the drawing-room mirror. "I guess they'll be considerable excitement in Bernardstown when they see all these good-looking clothes."

"You need different things up here," said Rowena hastily, and in evident fear of disconcerting expressions of gratitude.

But Georgie May said no more about it. She was not embarrassingly grateful—not seeing anything unusual in the

situation. If she put her arm around her cousin on the way to the dining room, it was probably only the overflow of an affectionate nature. She was very affectionate. She always kissed Rowena good night, quite unconscious of the fact that Rowena was not one of the "kissing sort."

"I had to buy her a few things," explained Rowena that night. "I couldn't take her to Highbury looking shabby, particularly in my old clothes. I suppose you've gathered that she's going to Highbury?"

Jimmie admitted carefully that he had.

"It did seem rather cruel to send her back so soon without giving her any fun at all," she went on. "There's nothing going on in town this time of year except theaters, and she seems to enjoy everything so much. I've explained that it's only for the rest of the month, as I have other guests coming. If I observe any tendency on the part of the youth of Highbury to fall in love with her, I'll pack her home before that. I'm not going to have a wedding on my hands."

But after a few days at Highbury she was relieved of any anxiety on that score. Georgie May, in spite of her delicious prettiness, enhanced by a lot of new frocks, didn't seem to strike Highbury. She was ill equipped for that strenuous community. While brown-armed, lanky girls were smashing tennis balls at the eligible young men, *she* was working at a bit of embroidery, or rendering on the piano a sentimental piece called "Hearts and Flowers." She couldn't even take a hand at bridge after dinner.

Highbury was as nice to her as her misdirected education permitted, for she was the guest of its most popular resident, but there was a distinct absence of any "marked attention." She had been the belle of Bernardstown before she was fairly out of the short-skirt-and-hair-ribbon stage; small wonder that she looked faintly bewildered at times, or that her giggle seemed less spontaneous.

It was within a few days of the end



"I never thought I'd want to marry any one, but—I guess I'm done for this time."

of an uneventful visit when Billie Stewart ran up with some friends for the polo week, and changed the face of things. Billie Stewart was well over forty, and, not having lived his years to the best advantage, looked it. But he was possessed of a fortune of such swollen proportions that neither years nor rumors chilled the ardor of the match-making mothers and the beautiful widows who pursued him. He had, however, so successfully eluded these

clever ladies that it took Rowena some time to grasp the fact that he was actually paying Georgie May devoted attention.

It started on the very evening of his arrival, when they met at a dinner that was not given over to the discussion of athletics to the usual extent of High-bury dinners. Georgie May, flushed and pretty, told a couple of darky stories with good effect. She could be very entertaining when she had a chance, and

Rowena, considering that she was only a second cousin, was rather ridiculously pleased. She also noticed that Billie Stewart seemed to find the stories uncommonly amusing.

After dinner he announced that he was tired of bridge, and spent the evening talking to Georgie May. Within a few days the affair was going with such breath-taking rapidity that not only Rowena, but all Highbury, was in the secret. When he wasn't giving luncheons at the club, or planning motor picnics, with the frankly sole intention of entertaining Mrs. Holt's guest, he was haunting the Holts' piazza like an enamored schoolboy. He thought "Hearts and Flowers" beautiful, and, when Georgie May deplored her ignorance of tennis and bridge, he said uncomplimentary things about the athletic-and-gambling type of woman, and congratulated her on her femininity. Meanwhile the time set for her departure came and passed without comment.

"Of course, I can't send her home *now*," said Rowena to Jimmie one evening, as they were dressing for one of Billie Stewart's numerous entertainments. "He's crazy about her. I wish he'd hurry up. I feel as nervous as if somebody was going to propose to *me*. I really believe he's timid about it."

"He ought to be," growled Jimmie.

Rowena looked at him uneasily.

"I never believed all those stories," she said. "And he's hardly been drinking anything here lately."

"Yes, he appears to be completely reformed," observed her husband in a sarcastic tone of voice. "An easy task at his age! I thought you weren't going to marry her off under any circumstances!"

"Oh, I never had any intention of flying in the face of Providence, Jimmie," she explained, slightly flushed. "You can't help taking a *little* interest in your relations. And a country wedding isn't much trouble. Why, he's worth millions! Think what it would mean to her family. And it's really his own. Not like poor Sallie's husband. Of course, he may not be all that

we'd like—no old bachelor is. But lots of very nice girls have tried to get him."

"Oh, I don't doubt it," groaned Jimmie. "Your 'nice' girls can be practical enough. But suppose she was *our* daughter!"

"Don't be absurd!" cried Rowena; but she found herself addressing a closing door.

She didn't enjoy the dance, although she presented that appearance. Her eyes followed Georgie May and her suitor until her head ached, and a catty Highburian observed to a companion chaperon that it was in poor taste for Rowena to gloat so publicly. It was a very late dance, and when she finally reached home, she spent the few hours left for sleep staring with wide eyes at a slowly brightening ceiling. She played execrable golf with gloomy tenacity all morning, and observed on her return, and with a certain grim humor, that Georgie May, who was just up, was looking very fresh and pretty.

It didn't cheer her to remember suddenly during luncheon that she had promised to go to Mrs. Griscom's bridge that afternoon. Rowena detested afternoon bridge, but old Mrs. Griscom owned a piece of land that was badly needed for the golf course, and every true Highburian was trying to be pleasant.

"And what have you got to do?" asked Rowena.

Georgie May, with a blush, had nothing in particular, but Mr. Stewart had said something about dropping in around tea time.

Mr. Stewart gave "around tea time" a somewhat broad interpretation by appearing at a quarter to three, as Rowena was waiting on the piazza for her car. He almost immediately forestalled her obvious intention of sending for Georgie May by observing that he was glad to find her alone. Before explaining this remarkable statement, he lit a cigarette, took a steady puff, and braced his shoulders.

"I suppose you've noticed that I'm very much taken with your young

cousin, Rowena," he began, very red in the face.

Rowena, it seemed, had noticed it. Billie stared very hard at his cigarette, and then looked up with an embarrassed smile.

"I never thought I'd want to marry any one, but—I guess I'm done for this time."

Rowena didn't return his smile. She stared at him for a disconcerting moment, felt herself reddening, heard herself falter:

"Oh, Billie, do you think you're the kind of man for a sweet young girl like Georgie May?"

She was almost as surprised as he was after she'd said it; but she wasn't sorry. She was, somehow, immensely relieved.

Billie Stewart rose, looking almost apoplectic.

"You might have thought of that before," he said thickly.

"I'm awfully sorry," she apologized vaguely. "Why didn't you go straight to her, instead of coming to me?"

His anger against her seemed to have evaporated quickly.

"I always like to do the proper thing," he half laughed. She had never liked him so well as when, with a deepening flush, he added: "I had some doubts *myself*, Rowena. That's why I came to you first. I—I wanted backing up. But I guess you're right. It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks."

She felt quite limp as he went down the steps, and pulled herself together with some difficulty when, five minutes later, her car came up the drive, and, almost simultaneously, Georgie May appeared in the hall door.

"You might ride over with me if you have nothing to do," said Rowena, without meeting her eye.

Georgie May accepted with alacrity. She still considered it an event to take even a short spin in a motor car.

As they stepped in, Rowena's intentions were of the best, but she was no sooner seated than they began to weaken. After two false starts she gave it up. It was only a ten-minute ride to Mrs. Griscom's, and this was a

delicate matter. She decided to wait until evening.

She was beginning to wish that she had not interfered. She wished that Jimmie, with his sentimental ideas, would leave her conscience alone. After all, Georgie May hadn't shown any intention of allowing her suitor's age to blind her to his income, and she might feel that his morals were proportionately unimportant. But perhaps it would have been rather a pity.

She cast a sidelong glance at Georgie May. How pretty she was in that linen frock and wide hat! It was outrageous that some rich, clean, handsome youth didn't fall in love with her; the country round was full of them. If she could only play tennis! Perhaps the winter was a better time—she *could* dance. Next winter perhaps—a month or two. After all, she was not much trouble, poor little thing!

Rowena arrived at this stage in her cogitations and at Mrs. Griscom's door at the same time. Having directed the chauffeur to meet Jimmie at the fifteen, and then call for her, she waved her cousin a vague good-by and went into a still vaguer game of bridge. After it was over, she said the necessary things to her hostess, and hurried out, only to make the annoying discovery that her car had not arrived.

With a rising irritation, she waited a few minutes, and then allowed a friend to take her home. She found Jimmie with the evening papers in a comfortable chair on the piazza.

"What's the matter with the car?" he demanded.

"Didn't it meet you, either?"

"No, Ferguson gave me a lift."

Rowena abruptly disappeared indoors and returned with the information that neither Miss Georgie May nor the car had returned after leaving her at Mrs. Griscom's. They looked at each other in some alarm.

"I hope they haven't had an accident," said Jimmie.

"She may have gone to see that girl she knows at Rye," reflected Rowena, but without conviction. "I'll telephone her."



"And oh, Cousin Rowena, we've been married!"

But she hadn't reached the door when the car turned into the drive. She realized how frightened she had been during those few minutes by the measure of her overwhelming relief. It was with a renewed shock that she observed Georgie May being handed out by a strange young man. But it was a perfectly sound Georgie May who threw her arms around Rowena's neck with

even more than her usual fervor, and cried:

"Oh, Cousin Rowena, I'm so sorry! We didn't think it would take so long. This is Burton Jefferson, of Bernards-town. We've been to Greenwich. And oh, Cousin Rowena"—she finished with a sob—"we've been married!"

"You've been what?" gasped Rowena.

Then Burton Jefferson, of Bernards-town, stepped forward. He was very young, and slender, and dark-eyed; also a trifle shabby.

"It was all my fault, Mrs. Holt," he explained. "I just made her do it."

"He just did, Cousin Rowena!" interpolated Georgie May, softening the accusation with a tearful, but ravishing, smile. "I met him coming from the station right after I left you, and he wouldn't wait another day."

"You see, I've been in love with Georgie May for a long time," resumed her husband. "We've been sort of engaged ever since we grew up. But I didn't have any money."

Rowena suppressed a sigh.

"I've had a pretty hard time since she came up North," he went on. "I knew exactly what Miss Sallie was up to when she brought her."

"Oh, Burton!" faltered Georgie May.

Burton smiled, but insisted on that point, and Rowena's heart warmed to him.

"Sallie's deep," she agreed.

"I don't blame Miss Sallie. She's dead tired seeing everybody around her so everlastingly poor—but that didn't make it any easier for me, and when Georgie May kept staying on and on, and writing me about the good time she was having, and the men she was meeting—"

He paused graphically, while Georgie May, with apparently no sense of guilt, regarded him with sparkling eyes.

"I almost started for New York two or three times," he continued. "But I didn't. I—I wanted to be fair—"

"And then his uncle died," put in Georgie May rapturously.

"Yes, my uncle, Judge Jefferson, of Nashville. He left me the bulk of his estate, and as soon as I heard it I took the next train North—and I just told Georgie May I wasn't going to take any more chances. You see it wasn't her fault, Mrs. Holt."

"Cousin Rowena, Burton," said Georgie May.

He corrected himself with a charming smile.

Rowena turned to Georgie May with a show of severity.

"I don't know what Mr. Stewart will think of you."

"Oh, Cousin Rowena, what will he? But I just couldn't have married him. I knew I ought to for the sake of the family, and I thought maybe I could at first, when it was a long way off, and kind of uncertain, but these last few days I just felt like I'd rather be poor all my life. And when I saw Burton this afternoon, I knew I never could have married anybody else; even if his uncle hadn't died— Wasn't it wonderful for him to be left a fortune just in the nick of time?"

"It isn't exactly a fortune, Georgie May," said her husband, with an uneasy sense that it might not seem any too large to people with country houses and motors, "but it will keep us from starving. It's about twelve hundred a year."

Rowena smiled. "I suppose you can live nicely in Bernardstown on that."

"Oh, but we're going to live in New York," cried Georgie May gleefully.

"You're going in business up here?" ventured Jimmie.

"I have been engaged in the study of law, sir," said Burton, with a charming combination of deference and youthful dignity. "And I imagine there is a much greater opportunity for a young lawyer in New York than in the South."

Jimmie didn't have the heart to voice his impression that there were approximately ten thousand lawyers in New York already. Rowena looked for a moment as if she were going to do it for him. Instead, she heard herself making a surprising suggestion.

"You had better stay with us for a while, until you can look around and see where you want to live and all that sort of thing."

Georgie May gave her a little squeeze. "Didn't I tell you she was a darling, Burton?"

Rowena, with a little laugh, looked rather helplessly at Jimmie, and caught in his eyes a twinkling reflection of Georgie May's opinion.

The Shell of Carpenter Lyte

by
Holman
F.
Day



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

A MAN came up the road afoot. Cap'n Aaron Sproul, seated on his porch, which had become to him as inviolable as a quarter-deck, with ankle hooked across his knee, and his pipe smoke streaming past his ears on the breeze, found himself taking only a languid interest in the man. In the distance he looked like almost any sort of a man—and an ordinary sort, at that.

But when he had approached nearer, the cap'n took two squints of real interest. The man carried a sailor's duffel bag, which was propped on an up-cocked elbow; he swung his feet in a peculiar way; now and then he snapped his head to one side, and ejected tobacco juice with an outthrusting of his chin.

He came to the gate and leaned upon it, and surveyed Cap'n Sproul with pale eyes—lifeless holes of vision under the edge of his cap's visor; his voice sounded as lifeless as his eyes looked.

"I've got the advantage of you, Cap'n Sproul, late of the *Jefferson P. Benn*, because I've took soundings along the road from time to time so as to find out where you live. Seeing that you don't remember me, I'll say that I'm——"

"You needn't say," broke in the cap'n briskly. "You needn't say! Rest that voice of yours as much as you can; it sounds all beat out. Your name is Lyte, and I had you with me for one trip as ship's carpenter. And I remember your disposition well enough to know that if you never die till you laugh yourself to death, you'll beat old Methus'lum's record by a million years."

"A man's natural disposition ain't to be changed overnight," stated Mr. Lyte. "And I see you are just as scornful as ever—with tongue that's sharper than the serpent's tooth. But I didn't come here expecting to be received other than I have been received."

"I don't remember anything that ever passed between us that would lead you to think that I'd give three cheers at sight of your face, and then would rush down there and hug and kiss you. But, see here, Carpenter Lyte. At this distance from salt water, two men who have been shipmates can't afford to twit. Open that gate and come aft here."

Mr. Lyte obeyed, and came upon the porch and set down his bag. He accepted from the hand of Cap'n Sproul a tall glass that was filled with amber-colored liquid.

"It's only a little lemonade punch, Carpenter Lyte—lemonade that has been punched wholesomely and judiciously with Jamaica rum. It won't

hurt you one mite. Here's to old days outside the three-mile limit!

"Now, Carpenter Lyte," went on the captain, smacking his lips, and sitting down, "you musn't walk up to a man and be so all-fired confident that he doesn't remember you. The man may be chafed on his remembering point that day and be touchy. Take my case. I was talking about you only yesterday right here on this porch."

Mr. Lyte elongated his somber face and opened his mouth, thereby producing considerable of an expression of amazement.

"Talking about you to a lady who set right here in that chair where you're setting," the cap'n went on, indicating the precise spot by pointing his pipe-stem.

Resentment at having been made the topic of conversation with a lady now was plainly mingled with Mr. Lyte's astonishment.

The cap'n studied the mingled expressions critically.

"I take it that you feel on the woman question just the same as you used to feel, Carpenter Lyte."

"No, I don't, either," snapped Mr. Lyte. "A man always improves as he grows older. I hate women twice as much as I did when you knew me—and I call that improvement. And I don't take it kindly of you to bring my name into the conversation when you're sitting down gassing with a woman. Stories and wrong impressions might start from it—and I've been too careful establishing my record to have anything like that happen. I warn you to look out and not tread on my reputation. No woman has ever come it over me, and no one of 'em can ever say that Chackerbal Lyte—"

Cap'n Sproul slapped his leg so violently that Mr. Lyte paused.

"That's it—Chackerbal!" he echoed. "Say, I tried for a whole hour yesterday to think of that name so as to tell it to Miss Todd, and the nearest I got to it was 'Checkerboard.' But simply calling you 'Checkerboard' pretty nigh spoiled the whole point of what I was trying to tell her, for I said that your

name had about as many kinks in it as your character had. You see, Carpenter Lyte, it was this way," proceeded the cap'n, paying no attention to the scowls of his subject. "Miss Todd is a bright woman, and I like to talk with her. She is about the only bright woman there is in my wife's family. It's too blamed bad that she has elected to live an old maid. She is bright enough to make some man a mighty nice wife."

"The brighter they are, the dangerouser they are. It's been my especial study. I have made notes, and have got the figgers all set down," stated Mr. Lyte. "If I had a little more eddication, I'd go ahead and write a book all about it. It would open the eyes of the world. It would save a whole lot of men."

"It's interesting to me to hear you talk that way," affirmed the cap'n delightedly. "I cited you when I was arguing with her. She argued that simply not getting married doesn't mean much about a person, one way or the other. But she said that men or women who had fought the idea of marriage had usually done something brilliant in the world. And I told her that the one who had fought it hardest, according to my own personal knowledge, was an old hunk of hornbeam who went carpenter with me one trip, and whose name was Lyte, and who never woke up real wide awake but once in his life, and that was when he sawed off the end of his forefinger. And that's the reason why I got interested in you to-day when you happened along here. It's a small world, after all."

"I wish it was bigger, myself," declared Mr. Lyte, arising and swinging his bag to his shoulders. "I'd be able to get farther away from you, you confounded old bucksaw! I wanted to call you that years ago on the *Benn*. I'm glad of the chance and the provocation to do it to-day."

"It ain't often that two men can meet and both be so glad as we are," commented the cap'n. "Now, see here, Carpenter Lyte, you'd better calm down and stay to dinner with me. When a man gets to arguing with a woman, and

has to cite an example in a hurry, to hold up his end, he may paint the example in pretty strong colors. I was trying to beat her out, and you ought to appreciate that part of it."

"I appreciate what any man does to put a woman down and out in argument, Cap'n Sproul, but where in thunder does it leave me, what you said?"

"You come in and eat dinner, and we'll talk on subjects where women don't enter, Carpenter Lyte. If you're just off the sea, I want to hear the latest gossip. And we're going to have sparerib—real pig pork—and apple sass for dinner."

Mr. Lyte tried hard to preserve his rancor, but he realized that moisture was trickling from the corners of his drooping mouth.

"My wife always puts whipped cream on top of her apple pies," continued the cap'n. "I'm hungry for some firsthand news along coast. Are you just off shipboard?"

"Only two days ashore," admitted Mr. Lyte. He was allowing his duffel bag to slip from his shoulders. "There have been a lot of shifts in the old crowd, Cap'n Sproul."

"Take a feller inshore, like me, and he doesn't get any real news in the shipping columns. Cleared, sailed, and reported passing—that don't amount to a snap! I've got my mouth open for barge-office gossip, like a young crow squawking for worms. My wife cooks sparerib till the meat cleaves from the bones. I tell you, Lyte, we set a table here of the real sort."

A Scotaze man who was passing in the highway saw Cap'n Aaron Sproul in a mood more amiable than was his wont, for he was slapping a sailor-looking man on the back, and urging him within doors, and the man was starting some sort of a story about an adventure that had recently happened to somebody by the name of "Cap'n Lute Blake."

Other passers-by that day saw the two sitting in close companionship on the Sproul porch. By the manner in which Cap'n Sproul was listening, legs crossed comfortably, head nested in his clasped hands, it was plain to all that

he was finding profit and interest in the water-front reports of Carpenter Lyte.

"But I've got to be moving on—moving on, Cap'n Sproul," confided the guest, noting the descending sun at last. "I'm looking for an inshore job of some kind."

The cap'n snapped upright in his chair, and stared at Mr. Lyte.

"I'd rather take a contract to tinker the hinges of tophet with solder than ship for carpenter on another coaster. Straw bottoms and putty masts, the whole of 'em. The last two I was on I pretty nigh built 'em over on the trip to Norfolk and back. In these days everything that's worth while has a smokestack or is towed, and what they want aboard are blacksmiths and tin knockers. No place for a carpenter. You don't happen to know of a job, do you?"

"I do."

The guest's somber face lighted with one ray of hopefulness.

"You won't like the sound of it when I tell you," proceeded the cap'n, "so I've got to chart it a mite for you before I give the call to heave anchor. I came ashore with rheumaticks eight or nine year ago with plenty of money to live on, and I took that job because my uncle was just dying, and was giving it up. Have you saved any money?"

"I've got five thousand in vessel property that's paying me ten per cent," said Mr. Lyte.

"Leave it right where it is—don't ever trust a landlubber. I came ashore and left mine where it was, and took that job just to fill in time and give me a line on folks inshore. It's a job that brings you in touch with a good many people. A sailorman needs that kind of experience. At first crack, you ain't going to think it's much of a job. I didn't think so, either. I was pretty much ashamed of taking it, me with about thirty thousand dollars in good-paying vessel property."

"It must be something pretty fierce for a job," commented Mr. Lyte, "for you're acting as if you didn't dast to tell me."

Cap'n Sproul shot him a glance of ire.

"A thing that was good enough for a master mariner, when he first came ashore and wanted to get his feet placed, is plenty good enough for a bung-fingered carpenter. You want to take care of that snarling disposition of yours, Lyte, and remember that I used to be on the quarter-deck when you were cooping scuttle butts in the lazareet. That job happens to be clear just now—man that held it died yesterday—and I'm one of the bridge trustees.

old nose of yours when I speak about the fine points in collecting tolls; there are some. I found that out. It's a job that grows on a fellow. First day I was at it—me, a master mariner—I felt about like a hand-organ monkey. Next thing you know, you're messing in with the public, something new and fresh every few minutes. What do you think, Lyte? I wasn't there a week before I'd met that little woman who cooked that dinner for us to-day. It was the one wife of all the world, and she had been waiting right here for me. God bless



"Cousin Aaron, I call on you to destroy that miserable insult to a decent woman," she cried.

It pays six hundred dollars a year, house free. You can settle right down there and do your own cooking, and live happy ever after. Job is collecting tolls at the Scotaze Bridge."

Mr. Lyte did not display any enthusiasm—perhaps his face was not built for such a purpose.

"Seems to me it's a mighty confining kind of a life," he complained.

"Well, what kind of a life have you been leading, you old caterpillar? It was a regular excursion for you if you were ever called aft to help trim the spanker. I've shown you a job that just fits your case. I'll sit around there with you for a spell and coach you on the fine points. You needn't curl up that

that old toll bridge, I say to myself every time I cross it."

Mr. Lyte arose and picked up his dunnage bag. Reproach and alarm were etched into his elongated features.

"Knowing my sentiments like you do, I reckoned you'd be the last man in the world who'd go ahead and set a trap for me. I'll be moving on—moving on, Cap'n Sproul."

"You old tubhead, you don't think, do you, that because you're taking tolls at that bridge some woman is coming along and grab you up? You ain't the kind a woman would ever take to, anyway. Don't you worry. You're safe. The only reason why I mentioned what happened to me is because I can't help

mentioning it. Something good may happen to another sailorman who takes the job—only in your case it won't be getting a wife. You'd attract a woman just about as much as an isuckle would attract a butterfly."

"I don't know as you need to set yourself up as the only sailor who can come ashore and get a wife if he wants one," snarled Carpenter Lyte, nettled by this persistent decrying of his charms. "I've had my chances if I'd had a mind to take 'em. But I've took my stand against all women, and I've been consistent—and my name will go down as a record."

"No woman knows anything about you and your record, and no woman cares," exploded Cap'n Sproul. "Now we have talked nonsense enough, Carpenter Lyte. There's a job for you till you can get something better. I'd like to have you hang around town for a time, so that we can talk over the old days, for I hanker for some sea talk every now and then. Do you want the job?"

"I'll try it—and thanks to you," stated Lyte, after a moment's consideration, impressed by the old skipper's masterful manner.

"Well, you may as well come along down now and settle. There's only a boy on the job till we can get somebody."

And before dusk, Mr. Lyte was collecting toll pennies with solemn dignity.

His mentor was early on the job next morning. Cap'n Sproul arrived with after-breakfast pipe well alight, and took his seat beside Mr. Lyte on the little porch of the toll gatherer's house.

"Well, how's she heading?" inquired the cap'n affably.

"Nothing special to complain of so far," replied Mr. Lyte, without any of the gloom departing from his countenance.

"That's no way to go through life, looking for something to complain of, and acting disappointed when you don't find it, Carpenter Lyte. Why don't you perk up and tell me that you've got a lot to be thankful for? Nice little

house, green vines over the porch, river sparkling and guggling past here, folks passing every now and then, ready with a kind word if you're only half decent with 'em! I'll never forget how much I enjoyed it them first few weeks ashore! It ain't simply sticking out your hand for coppers. There's a lot to post yourself on and remember. There's simply the 'how-be-ye' folks; there's others that need a few pleasant words; there's some that'll pass you a little line of chat and need to be humored; there's some that's crusty and have to be favored."

"If anybody comes along here looking for trouble, the same will be handed out and served hot," interjected Mr. Lyte, showing real interest for the first time.

"Don't start in on this job with that spirit, Carpenter Lyte. I got ashore with some such notions in me. But look what has happened! You have seen my home up there on the hill, and noted how comfortably I fit into it. I set right here on this porch, and along came the little woman who changed the whole world over for me. She——"

"I'll tell you what you're trying to do!" blazed Mr. Lyte, standing up and cracking his knuckles agitatedly. "You're laying a plot to catch me foul like you've been caught! I won't stand for no tricks of that kind, and I give you fair warning that I——"

The cap'n shut off this harangue by shaking Carpenter Lyte vigorously.

"You're slurring my wife when you make such talk as that," advised the mentor. "I tell you again that no woman would pick you up with tongs. I don't want you to be married off. I ain't entertaining no grudge of that sort against womenkind. I'd warn any woman I caught looking twice at you. Now let's get down to business and something sensible. As managing director of the bridge trustees, I'm here to ask you if anything is needed."

"If you know of anybody that's got a couple of cats to give away, I'd like 'em," quavered the other, backing away when the cap'n released him.

"What are you trying to do—make

fun of me? Or have I jarred the common sense all out of you?"

"'Tain't either. I've always wanted a couple of cats for company. I like 'em better'n I do humans. I've always said to myself that if I was so situated, I'd keep a couple of cats, and call 'em Max and Climax."

"I'll furnish 'em," promised the cap'n curtly. "You've got a general disposition that's just about right to match a cat's. It'll make a happy family. Name 'em Gloom and Grouch, and then go ahead and lead a rollicking life. If it wasn't for the fact that you have stuck your nose into everybody's business along shore, and are full of news, I'd throw them cats at you and stay away from here."

But at the end of another week, even Cap'n Aaron Sproul was obliged to admit that Carpenter Lyte was developing traits that were not wholly unamiable. He seemed to imbibe restful peace there by the river's side. He flourished sailor salutes when he took the toll pennies. He smiled when passers gave him kindly hail. He was a picture of content when he sat with his cats on his knees.

He began to develop a garden in the little plot back of his house, Cap'n Sproul volunteering plenty of good advice from his own experience in raising "garden sass." With much ingenuity, Carpenter Lyte arranged jingle bells to warn him of the approach of patrons. He was able to spend much time in the cultivation of his vegetables.

"I ain't going to invite you down to eat with me till I get the first pickings out of that garden," Mr. Lyte informed the cap'n. "Then I'll show you some eating that's eating."

"I'll come when I get the invite," the cap'n assured him heartily. "But I'm going to tell you frank and plain, Carpenter Lyte, that I relish women's vittles better'n I do anything a man ever put over the fire. And I had good cooks on my vessel, at that!"

"That shows how a man's best judgment can get warped when he lets a woman hornswoggle him," declared Lyte.

He was doing something or other with small sticks, hammer, nails, and a jackknife, and a pile of clothing of some sort was lying at his feet. Cap'n Sproul was paying little heed to his operations, for he had found that Carpenter Lyte was usually tinkering at folderols. Mr. Lyte went on, whittling furiously as he talked:

"Women in these days are thinking of too many other things than cooking. They're messing and meddling into 'most everything where they don't belong. They've grown to be fakes, mostly. The other day, just to convince myself that I'm right in thinking as I do, I bought a package of this Mrs. Tackitt's Pancake Flour, that all the newspapers are advertising so big. Say, let me tell you, the old dough slinger didn't have her mind on her business one mite when she put up that package I got hold of. There was so much salaratus in it that them biskits would have given yaller janders to a brindle pup. She was probably looking out of the winder or yelling across lots to a neighbor about the latest scandal when she slapped the stuff into that package."

"Is that all you know about inshore things, to believe there's any real Mrs. Tackitt?" demanded Cap'n Sproul. "That's only advertising. All them folks that you see with pictures in the paper, there ain't none of 'em in real life. It's advertising, I say. There ain't no Mrs. Tackitt, putting up flour. That factory, I dare say, covers acres."

"It says on the package it's her flour," replied Mr. Lyte doggedly. "Her name is right there. Woman's name is given out. A man wouldn't stand for it. Takes a woman to run a fake."

"If you and me are to have these little setbacks from day to day, and swap water-front talk," advised the cap'n, "you'd better keep off'm the subject of women. You can't change my opinion of 'em by your slurs, and some day you may get me mad enough so that I'll try to change your opinion with my fists. It's a tender point with me."

"It's tender with me, too. And it's tenderer when I think of one woman," said Mr. Lyte, in such changed tones

that the cap'n stared at him in wonderment.

A tear oozed from the carpenter's eye, and promptly hid itself behind Mr. Lyte's nose as if it were ashamed.

"My Lord, it has just come to me!" ejaculated the cap'n. "I ought to have known it! You have been disappointed in love!"

"You lie!" returned Mr. Lyte, with vigor, and without regard to the amenities of retort. "The woman I'm talking about was my mother—and there was never no other for me."

After a silence that continued for some time, Cap'n Sproul cleared his throat, and said:

"Excuse me, Lyte."

"And I want that you should excuse me, too, Cap'n Sproul. I snap things out too quick when I'm started. I wish I didn't, but I do. There wasn't no girls in our family, and mother sort of coddled me. I never have seemed to find

anybody who could match up to mother. If ever I sort of weakened any, mother seemed to hover over me and advise me not to."

"Are you sure, Carpenter Lyte, that it isn't your own cantankerousness of disposition that ails you, instead of advice from your mother over in the spirit land?" inquired the cap'n. "I'll bet she was a good woman."

"She was."

"Well, it ain't the nature of a good woman to throw down all other women. The wires have got crossed if you believe it's your mother advising you. Any mother knows that the best thing that can happen to her son is to have him marry some good woman."

"But I have tested it all out that she does hover over and advise me," insisted Mr. Lyte earnestly. "There was never no cook like she was. I know that's said a lot by men about their mothers, and things do taste better to

boys, and all that. But she was a cook that had a reputation far and wide. There was never none of her cake lugged back from the vestry suppers—it was et to the last scrimptom, and folks was always hollering for more.

"I went to sea, and didn't cook for myself for so long that I forgot the old receipts of mother's. Well, what happened when I hankered for some of the old things and started in to cook? It all came to me just as if she was standing there whispering in my ear. And when the stuff came off'n the fire, it tasted just like it did in the old days—and land knows I never claimed to be much of a cook. It proves it to me, that mother talks to me. And if she can and does talk about cooking, why shouldn't she talk about things that's fully as important?"



"Look through here, Cap'n Sproul, and blush for your relations!"

"You can't drag me into any argument on that point," declared the cap'n sturdily. "Carpenter Lyte, I would never so much as scratch by one word your belief that your mother stands over you now just as she did in the old days when she coddled you. It's a mighty comfortable belief, and I truly hope you'll always have it, even though it does make you take a wrong viewpoint of other good women in this world."

He changed the subject energetically by pointing his finger at the work on which Mr. Lyte was busily engaged.

"What kind of a blamed contraption is that?" he inquired.

By this time the carpenter had completed a sort of framework which lay across his knees. He set it upright on the porch. It bore rude resemblance to the framework of the human body, with laths for ribs and saplings for the larger bones.

"Scarecrow," explained Mr. Lyte sententiously. "This is the frame, and I shall dress it up with some of the clutter I found up in the attic of this house. Lot of old dresses there."

"Man's wife was shiftless and he was sick and all his money went for doctor's bills. She begged old clothes right and left so that she could rig out and parade the street. Folks round here was glad when some of her relations took her away. You'd better burn up them dresses and things."

"Being of a saving disposition, I'll keep 'em for scarecrow togs," stated the other.

"But you don't need a scarecrow where your garden is so near the house."

"I ain't a man to go halfway in anything. A garden seems more like a garden when it's got a scarecrow in it. It's shipshape. It's full-rigged, so to speak. A sailor can't stand for a thing half-rigged, any more'n he'd feel contented in a ship without a jib boom."

"If that's the way you feel, and have got to have one of them things to look at, make it a man scarecrow. It ain't showing respect to the sex to make it a woman—and Lord knows what woman

will come along here and recognize them clothes as hers. They was scrambled up all over town."

But Mr. Lyte, unimpressed by this rebuke, began to drape garments upon the frame.

He was just topping the simulacrum off with a plumed bonnet when the jingle of his bell signaled a passer. It was a lady of comfortable girth and comely features, and she was ensconced in a phaëton which was drawn by a fat horse.

Cap'n Sproul hailed her delightedly, when she was at some distance, as "Cousin Minniebelle Todd." Then he warned Mr. Lyte in an aside through the corner of his mouth that this was the Miss Todd of whom he had once made mention as a bright woman.

"And she is to be used genteel and polite—you remember that," counseled the cap'n, as Lyte left the porch to collect the toll.

Miss Todd, dropping the dole of pennies into Mr. Lyte's outstretched hand, looked directly past that gentleman, and surveyed with amazement the effigy that the carpenter had just finished.

"By what right does any wretch dare to use my clothes in any such fashion as that?" she demanded.

"Them ain't your clothes, marm," stated Mr. Lyte. "I found 'em up in my attic, and I'm daring to use 'em as a scarecrow in my garden."

"But they *were* my clothes. I gave them to that woman when she came begging. Folks who go past here will recognize my dress and my hat. Burn that thing instantly, sir."

"If you gave 'em away, all so fine and gay," said Mr. Lyte, bridling at the contempt that she displayed for him in eyes and tone, "they ain't yours no longer. I ain't inviting any trouble with you at all, marm. I'm just minding my own business, as it's set down for me to mind. And I'll thank you to pass along and mind yours. I ain't used to arguing with women, and I don't want to take no lessons in it now."

"Cousin Aaron, I call on you to destroy that miserable insult to a decent woman," she cried, but Mr. Lyte sprang



Mr. Lyte gave a mighty leap into the air, and went down on his back.

to it nimbly and whisked it around the corner of the house. As he disappeared, he had something to say about a woman's whim trying to destroy a work of art on which he had spent three days of thought and labor. He intimated with much heat that he was prepared to defend that scarecrow with his heart's blood.

"It would be better for him if he'd show as much regard for a real woman," grumbled the cap'n. "I don't know what I can do about it just now, Miss

Minniebelle. I'll argue it over with him a little later, after you have gone. And you'd better be going. When a couple of sailormen get into argument, a woman in hearing sort of interferes with their sea room, as you might say."

But although the prompt and indignant departure of Miss Todd left to Cap'n Sproul the desired "sea room," he made no progress at all with the intractable Mr. Lyte. That man of ingenuity intrenched himself in a corner of the garden, his work of art at his back, and announced that the cap'n would have to walk over his dead body to get at it. A crazy sculptor could not have shown more zeal in guarding his masterpiece. The cap'n cursed Mr. Lyte roundly, and went home.

"He is about the most warped man I ever run acrost," he

confided to his wife across the dinner table. "An old sea turkle, with a shell so thick that you couldn't dent it with a wedge pessle. There's just one crack in it. I found it to-day when he began to talk about his mother. It made me feel sympathy for him when he was backed up there in the corner of the garden, calling me names for trying to get that scarecrow away from him. I had a club in my hand that was plenty big enough, and I might have made a fool of myself if I hadn't thought of

what he had said about his mother. I tell you, woman has a softening influence, Louada Murilla."

"But I wish you had got Minnie-belle's clothes away from him, Aaron. It's an awful thing for a woman to see her dress set out to scare crows, and be a topic for everybody who goes across that bridge. I gave that tollkeeper's wife some of my clothes. He'll be parading them next thing."

"No, he won't," declared the cap'n. "I'll just step down there to-night, when all is quiet, and throw that thing into the river. I can throw 'em overboard as fast as he can make 'em."

But when Cap'n Sproul scaled the garden fence that night, intent on his scheme of abduction, he found that Mr. Lyte had thriftily taken his scarecrow into his castle. Craft had been matched with craft. It was plain that the scarecrow was to officiate only on the day shift.

The next day, Mr. Lyte was by no manner of means amenable to argument.

"I ain't disturbing nobody—I'm minding my own business strickly," he advised the incensed cap'n. "She went and give away her clothes—they ain't hers no more. All I've got is her say-so as to whether they was ever hers, anyway. If I go to work now and give in to the whim of the first woman who comes along here, just as I'm getting settled, I won't be doing anything else but giving in to women's whims. I'll be a marked man. My whole reputation will be ruined where women are concerned. I want 'em to keep away from me. I propose to have 'em understand that I ain't the kind that can be put upon by women. I'll make a test case of this thing so that I'll be let alone for the rest of the time."

"What right have you got to go out there in my garden and destroy a thing that I've made with my own hands and take pride in? I'll sue you if you do. It'll sound nice in court, won't it, when they tell about Cap'n Aaron Sproul beating up one of his old seafaring mates so as to rescue a scarecrow? Blast me, if I don't send marked copies

to the barge office and the whole water front."

That was a threat that availed more in the case of the cap'n than mere display of fists and violence. He flushed, and went up to Miss Todd's house on the hill, and suggested to her that it would be better to treat that surly old crab of the toll house with the silent contempt that he deserved; as for the framework on which her discarded garments were flaunted to the breeze, what did it matter, after all?

"You're not a woman, and you don't understand," retorted Miss Todd. "If I go down there and stand outside the fence and riddle that thing to bits with a shotgun, and he gets in the way of the shot, what do you suppose a jury will say?"

"One lunatic on my hands is plenty enough at present writing," cried the exasperated cap'n. "You keep your sitting, Miss Minniebelle, and give me time to straighten him out. Remember that he's just ashore off the high seas, and hasn't more'n half come to his senses as yet. Make a little allowance for him."

Miss Todd sniffed, set her lips, and turned away without response.

"I've got a sailorman's instink for nasty weather ahead," muttered the cap'n, on his way home. "Take an old bach and an old maid that have got the antimarriage feeling ingrowing, and locate 'em close to each other, and the thing has simply got to work itself out. I'm going to get onto the side lines in this thing."

The principal side line proved to be the porch of the tollhouse. He offered no further threats against the scarecrow. Mr. Lyte had efficiently closed his mouth on that topic.

"It ain't that I'm mean-spirited, or want to twit or taunt a woman," explained the carpenter. "I simply want to show that I can't be bossed. It's only a silly notion on her part about them clothes, and I'll never have it said that Chackerbal Lyte gave in to a woman's silly notions."

On the second day, Mr. Lyte received Cap'n Sproul with fury in his mien.

"This is a nice town to invite a man to settle down in to spend his last days in peace," he exploded. "I was out in my garden yesterday, thinning beets, and no bell jingled nor nothing, but somebody slipped in and stole my best suit of navy blue, cap and all."

"This town ain't responsible for all the tramps who march through, and it behooves a man to keep his door locked."

Mr. Lyte, not moderating his ire, fished from his waistcoat pocket a celluloid hairpin. He shook it under the cap'n's nose.

"That was right in the middle of my setting-room floor when I came in from the garden—and I'd swept that floor not a half hour before. Do you want to stand there and tell me that tramps in these parts do up their hair with pins? There ain't no women been in my house except the one that came and stole them clothes—and I've got my suspicions, and I'm keeping my eye out."

In order to show that he was keeping the aforesaid eye out, he hurried to a corner of his porch, where he had suspended with rope yarn a battered old spyglass. The glass was trained on the premises of Miss Todd on the hill.

"It's many a sail and buoy I've picked up with that glass," stated Mr. Lyte, "and it ain't going to fail me now."

The next moment he uttered a yelp of mingled rage and conviction.

"Come here, come here, and look through," he commanded his caller. "There's the kind of nice relatives you've got! There's the woman who was so fussy about her old hand-me-downs! Look what she has done! That old spyglass has never failed me. I know my own clothes when I see 'em. Look through here, Cap'n Sproul, and blush for your relations!"

Cap'n Sproul, with the sailor's true eye at a glass, took in what was happening on the hilltop.

Miss Todd was marching into the center of her corn patch, bearing a scarecrow of her own. Its lackadaisical arms flopped as she walked; its lopped-over head dangled. When she

set it upright, with its peaked cap on its head, it assumed ludicrous resemblance to Mr. Lyte, for Miss Todd spent some moments in arranging its pose, showing that she had studied the gentleman for which it was understudy.

"By the great dod-dinged draw-shave of Nicodemus!" raved Mr. Lyte. "She has stole my clothes, and she means that thing up there for me, and I'll go up there and let her see what a real man is! I don't give a continental hoot if she does look like a woman—she ain't one—no woman who is a woman would do that to a man! She doesn't deserve any respect!"

"Just one minute before you start!" suggested the cap'n. "Miss Todd looks like a woman, as you've just said, but she has lived alone so long that she is pretty apt at times to act like a man. I'll advise you to call this scarecrow game a tie, Carpenter Lyte, even Stephen, score one apiece, and let it all drop. I know Miss Todd mighty well, and if you go raving up there you'll get into trouble."

"I don't take no advice from you or any of the rest of the family," squealed Mr. Lyte, as he straddled over the fence and started up across the field. "I'll make a test case of the whims of one woman in this town so that the rest of 'em will let me alone."

Cap'n Sproul, left alone, strolled out into Mr. Lyte's garden, and pulled up the scarecrow. He went to the river bank, and threw it far out into the stream, and it floated away, a bedraggled effigy of a drowned maiden.

"There's one less thing to fight about," said the cap'n to himself. "There's nothing like taking advantage of a good opportunity."

He arrived back on the porch just in season to behold Mr. Lyte finishing the last stage of his journey up the hill. He was waving his arms wildly, and shaking his fists at Miss Todd, who stood a few yards apart from the new scarecrow. Mr. Lyte, for all his menace of Miss Todd, did not presume to approach her, but kept on toward his "double" in the suit.



Miss Todd slipped two more bulky cartridges into the gun that she carried across her arm.

While the cap'n gazed, the runner paused and faced Miss Todd, who was evidently addressing some remarks to him—remarks sufficiently pregnant to arrest the close attention of Mr. Lyte.

Cap'n Sproul hastened to the suspended spyglass and squinted through it.

"Suffering sculpins, she's got a shotgun!" he barked. "And that blasted fool of a carpenter doesn't know enough about women to keep away from the kind Minniebelle Todd is when she gets well waked up! I may be able to get there in time."

He climbed the fence and began to run up the hill, but he saw Lyte whirl away from Miss Todd with a derisive flirt of his hand and leap toward the scarecrow. The blasts from both barrels of the shotgun mingled with a groan from the hurrying cap'n. Mr. Lyte gave a mighty leap into the air, and went down on his back.

"It's murder!" gasped the galloping cap'n. "But I shall go on the stand and say he brought it all on himself."

When he came stamping upon the scene, he found Miss Todd bending over her victim. But she was neither wringing her hands nor lamenting. She turned up to the incoherent cap'n a gaze that was comparatively calm.

"For Heaven's sake, calm down and be of some help to me right now," she advised. She called to a farm hand of hers, who had come running and stood agape at a little distance. "Cap'n Sproul, you and my man pick up this individual, and carry him into my house. There's no call for all this bluster."

The cap'n was somewhat relieved to discover that his former shipmate had his eyes wide open, and was whining. He bore a lively hand with the farmer, and between them they lifted the victim and followed Miss Todd. They tugged Lyte into the house, and laid him on a bed.

"Now, Aaron," said Miss Todd, who was calmly the mistress of the situation, "you go down into the village and send up Doctor Tubbs, and you keep your mouth shut."

"But this thing is—it's almost murder," stammered the cap'n. "It has got to be reported."

"Reported cat's foot!" snapped Miss Todd. "It's a matter strictly between this fool man and myself. He declared that he was going to show *me*—and I decided that I would show *him*. I showed him with some salt and some wadding and just a few bird shot—a very few bird shot. I'll have the doctor

up to see whether any of the bird shot got through that shell that Mr. Lyte boasts of."

She gave the aforesaid Mr. Lyte a look that made that uncomfortable gentleman roll his eyes and turn them from her gaze.

"Men are mostly fools, and this is one of the principal ones," proceeded Miss Todd. "I have decided to make a test case of him. I shall keep him here until he is all right. Get a man to take his place at the bridge—and keep your mouth shut. If you blab this thing, Aaron, I'll try that shotgun on you."

"I want to be took away from here," whined Mr. Lyte, as the cap'n turned to leave. "I'll get up and walk off by myself, at the risk of shedding the rest of my life's blood on the way."

Miss Todd slipped two more bulky cartridges into the gun that she carried across her arm.

"When you leave here to make complaint against me," she said, "you will have more ground for complaint than you have now. Lie back on that bed! You need to understand a little more about women—and when I get done with you, you'll be more careful how you use that tongue of yours as you travel about the world."

For four successive days, Cap'n Aaron Sproul knocked at the door of the Todd house on the hill, and was informed by the hired girl that there was an invalid within, and that no visitors were allowed to enter.

On the fourth day, he was admitted by Miss Todd herself, who curtly refused to answer questions, and led him to Mr. Lyte's room. Mr. Lyte greeted his caller with a radiant smile. The gloom had departed from his features. He was arrayed in his new suit, which had evidently been replevined from the scarecrow, and wore carpet slippers, and was enthroned in a comfortable chair. Miss Todd left them together.

"I was all well three days ago," confided Mr. Lyte, shielding his mouth with his hand. "But I didn't want to leave. I've been playing sick. I reckon she cracked my shell with that shotgun. I ain't worthy of her, Cap'n Sproul. I

shan't ever dare to ask her to have me. But so long as I'm here close to her, in this house, I just blossom right out into happiness—I can't help smiling all the time. I don't dare to stop laughing, for fear I shall cry at the thoughts of having to go away and be lonesome all the rest of my life. I'm glad to see you. Go to her and say for me that I'm worthless and no account and all that—but that I've got a little in vessel property, and am hard working, and will take a-holt here, and——"

"I ain't no marriage bureau, like you've twitted me of being," said the cap'n, scowling at his former mate. "If you've got any marriage proposals to make to anybody, you go ahead and make 'em yourself. Proposing marriage is like breathing, eating, and sleeping—you've got to do it for yourself."

"But I never can—I don't dare—I've put myself on record with her—she would never condescend to have me," cried Carpenter Lyte.

"That's just the spirit to have when you approach a good woman to ask her to be your wife," affirmed the cap'n. "Show it plain enough to her, and you'll win. Be meeching, haul down that independence flag from your main truck, and make her understand that you're repentant. You seem to be in the right mood just now. I'll send her in."

He broke away from the frenzied Mr. Lyte, who pleaded for more time—for further preparation—for mercy.

In view of the fact that, one month later, the cap'n and the devoted wife of his bosom stood up with Miss Todd and Mr. Lyte before the minister and admiring friends, it must have been that the cap'n's diagnosis of the fit condition of Mr. Lyte for prompt and effective proposal on that occasion in the sitting room was according to the usual good judgment of Cap'n Aaron Sproul in matters of the heart.

The Scotaze toll bridge lost another sailorman toll gatherer. Carpenter Lyte developed into a first-class farmer, and the only scarecrow that he ever permitted himself to use was a dead crow suspended by a string from a stake.



MISS MITTY AND THE AGES HENCE

by Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Awakening of Romola," "Monseigneur," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

MISS MITTY often said that she was the loneliest woman in the world. She never said it lugubriously, however. The words were always spoken in a way that seemed rather to call attention to the blessings of the person whom she addressed than to her own sorrows.

"If only I had an old mother, now," Miss Mitty would say to the possessor of an old mother, half admiringly, half enviously, "it seems to me I'd never feel lonely any more. Or an old father, who needed me, or even an aunt or an uncle."

She seldom let her flights of fancy in regard to human belongings reach the height of expressing a desire for a husband or for children of her own. Sometimes, to be sure, she used to say:

"I have half a mind to adopt a baby. Wouldn't it be lovely to have some one to do for, besides yourself? But, dear me, what would I do with it while I was out sewing all day? Not many people would want their seamstress bringing a baby to work. But it would be nice to find it in its little crib when I came home of an evening."

Very often Miss Mitty's listeners, the married women for whom she did sewing, would shake their heads at her, and would tell her that she didn't know when she was well off; that she had no idea of the work and the worry that she was missing.

And Miss Mitty, cocking her head on one side, and appearing to debate the

question within her mind, would generally say:

"Well, work and worry against loneliness—and I'll take the work and worry every time. Somehow you get to feeling that you're no use in the world, if all that you do is to keep a watertight roof over your own head, and a warm coat on your own back, and good food in your own stomach, and put by a little each week for your own grave when all's over with you.

"It isn't just the comfort of having some one to do for, now, that a lonely person misses. It's the going on and on—ages on. Perhaps you aren't much, and you haven't seen much or known much; but, sakes alive, what does it matter if you're going to have it all in your great-great-grandson—if he's going to see the Indian temples and the castles on the Rhine, and if he's going to know all that there is in books, and be able to tell the stars one from another? You've helped to make him. It's you that's going on in him. And every time that you do a hard, right thing, or let alone an easy, wrong thing, why, you're affecting him a hundred years away! Oh, it's just wonderful! But if you're a lone woman, like me, it's not only comfort that you miss, it's being an influence. I've always wanted to be an influence, and look at me!"

And Miss Mitty's joyous, throaty, little laugh would ring out in a half-plaintive, half-merry self-derision. She



She always walked along quite briskly, with an air of purpose.

saw the humor of mentioning herself and influence in the same breath.

However, that imagination of Miss Mitty's, which could picture grandsons alive and real among the marvelous scenes familiar to her only through "The World's Wonder Book," enabled her to live fairly happily, although she conscientiously tried to keep it under control during five out of the seven days in each week. But on Saturday afternoons and Sundays she gave it a free rein. And that was how it happened that habitués of upper Fifth Avenue grew in time to have a certain

feeling of recognition for an agile little figure, rather queerly dressed, and for a wistful, half-smiling, middle-aged little face that they saw once a week in their habitat. For Miss Mitty gave her imagination its Saturday half holiday about matinée and tea time on that gay and crowded thoroughfare.

She always walked along quite briskly, with an air of purpose. She always seemed to have an errand, a pleasant errand, if one could judge from the soft shining of her nearsighted eyes behind her glasses, and the faint smiling of her lips. And if one followed her

movements, he would discover that she did, indeed, have an errand. She always went on Saturdays to the big candy store, where men were buying their week-end boxes, and women making their dinner-table selections. And she always trotted, with her birdlike briskness of manner, to that part of the long counter devoted to the more innocuous variety of sweets suitable for children. She scanned them all with a judicial eye; now and then even with a judicial mouth she tested them. Any one looking at her would have said, inevitably, that she was a quaintly careful mother, properly concerned about the digestion of a nursery full of children.

That was what Radcliff said to himself the first time that he saw her. Radcliff always stopped at the big candy shop on his way down from his chambers to the train that he took each Saturday afternoon out to Ardsley and Amy Kleston. Amy had a ridiculous appetite for marrons, and it always amused him and gratified some sense of masculine superiority in him to see the childlike eagerness with which she dipped into the big box. Childlike eagerness was such an unexpected quality in Amy that it was probably the most piquantly charming thing about her.

The first time that he saw Miss Mitty, distracted between molasses peppermints and barley sugar, he smiled. She was such an incongruous little figure in the shop. Radcliff had an eye for contrasts in his so-called idle moments; those were the moments in which he was not concerned with the operations of the stock market. He had tried being a story writer when he came out of college, before he had found out how much more profitable it is to be a broker; and some of his old tricks of mind and imagination had remained with him. He tried to describe Miss Mitty, with her quaint little air, and her quaint, old-fashioned clothes, to Amy. But Mrs. Kleston was not interested.

The next Saturday, Radcliff's imagination insisted upon following Miss

Mitty home and distributing that pound of candy, piece by piece, and always after meals, among five or six children. He did not mention this picture to Amy Kleston. She had told him, quite frankly, that children bored her; she admitted that she had been bored even by her own little boy during the three or four years that she had permitted the child and Mr. Kleston to condemn her to the sort of life that she loathed.

Amy's son had been born two years after her marriage, and that insane experiment, as she called it, had lasted only six years before the divorce. Perhaps she was right in saying that she had tried the situation long enough to know that it didn't suit her. The boy was living with his father's parents, and in the early days of his infatuation it had relieved Radcliff immensely to know that he would never be obliged to share Amy's affection with the child of another man. Naturally, therefore, he did not reveal to the fascinating Mrs. Kleston, on the second Saturday of observing Miss Mitty, the idle speculation that the sight of her had aroused in him.

On the third Saturday he was amazed to find that he was looking forward with some anxiety to seeing the queer little woman with the friendly eyes and the kind smile. The vision of her occupied the foreground of his imagination even to the exclusion of the beautiful figure that usually held that place at that hour—the figure of Amy Kleston, long, slim, sinuous, with dark, provocative eyes, and skin as fair as a camellia petal. He felt a relief, a sense of not being cheated, when he arrived at the store in time to meet Miss Mitty and her modest parcel going out.

He held the door open for her, thereby ousting from the service for which he was hired a small boy resplendent in green and brass livery. Miss Mitty thanked him heartily, and he caught the quality of her voice, its wistful, happy friendliness. He told himself that she reminded him of a girl whom he had known out home in Indiana long ago, a girl with whom he had gone to

school, a girl to whom—Radcliff called a sharp halt upon his recollections.

"There's no use being a sentimental fool," he told himself, "and she's probably buying candy this blessed minute for her brood's Sunday luncheon."

Her brood! If the glitter of success and the glamour of a succession of Amy Klestons had not estranged him and the Indiana girl years and years ago, that brood might have been his!

"Thank God it isn't!" said Radcliff roughly.

He thought that he was saying it to himself, and not until the young goddess behind the counter raised her eyebrows at him and icily begged his "pardon," did he realize that he had spoken aloud. Whereupon he begged her pardon, and demanded the usual Saturday supply of marrons for his fiancée.

He hoped that Amy and her father and mother, with whom she was living, would not have the house filled with the usual noisy, card-playing, hard-riding, hard-drinking crowd of week-enders. He wanted a chance to talk to Amy alone, seriously, not merely for the usual snatched half hour of allurements and endearment; he wanted to talk to her about their marriage. But by some obstinate trick, his imagination refused to glow at the thought of that consummation, and went following Miss Mitty home to her supposititious family. It also took a journey westward to the girl he used to know.

Fate vouchsafed the opportunity for serious conversation with his affianced. And no one could have been more surprised than he himself to hear how he availed himself of it.

"How about your little boy, Amy?" he asked Mrs. Kleston, after she had averred that she could get ready for her wedding in a month, because "a divorcee should always be married quietly; it's bad taste not to."

Amy's eyes narrowed at the absurd question, and all the supple, graceful body seemed to stiffen.

"What do you mean?" she asked shortly.

"You'll want him with you, when you have a home of your own again?" sug-

gested Radcliff. "The court awarded him to you, did it not?"

"Divided him between us," Amy corrected him coldly. "The rest of the arrangement was a purely amicable one between us. The child's all right. Why should I bother? The old Klestons are devoted to him. It would break their hearts," added Amy piously, as one who could not be guilty of harshness to the aged, "to give him up."

"And doesn't it do anything to your heart, Amy?"

"Really, Hal, I've never made the slightest pretense of considering myself a good mother, or even the possibility of a good mother. Children bore me stiff. It's much better for every one concerned that the boy should stay where he is, especially for himself."

Radcliff listened attentively, all the while contrasting in his mind Amy's looks and voice with the looks and voice of the woman for whom he had opened the door of the candy shop, and of the girl whom he had used to know in Indiana. And, suddenly, he heard himself saying, again greatly to his own astonishment:

"I'm getting old, Amy. I'm thirty-eight. I want the real thing."

And Amy Kleston, being as she herself would have said, no fool, had understood him perfectly. And having ample proof on every hand that not all men had reached the same age as Radcliff, or yearned for the same variety of reality, she dismissed him to seek what he wanted elsewhere.

Radcliff continued his Saturday afternoon pilgrimages to the candy shop, and found some solace for a sore and turbulent spirit in the smiling regard of Miss Mitty. He bought innocuous candies himself, now, to present to the children of his college chum, with whom he had begun the pleasing practice of Sunday dining. The college chum's wife had a sister who would have been somewhat surprised to learn that her first attraction in Mr. Radcliff's eyes was a fancied resemblance to Miss Mitty, and perhaps a slight suggestion of the girl out in Indiana, with her husband and her brood of children. In



"Really, Hal, I've never made the slightest pretense of considering myself a good mother, or even the possibility of a good mother."

time, of course, he came to think that there was no one in the world at all like her, and to believe that that had been his firm opinion from the first.

II.

Miss Mitty's Saturday afternoon extravagances did not end with the purchase of the box of candy, which she bought to be divided between her land-

lady's children, the poor old lady with a sweet tooth in the second-story back room, and herself. She had another, which she had begun to permit herself about a year before the time when Radcliff had first noticed her.

As she walked up the avenue one afternoon, she had noticed for the first time a tiny flower shop tucked away in what must once have been only an entrance hall. Miss Mitty always stopped

before the big plate-glass windows with glorious pots, and bushes, and vases behind them, and glued her nose to the broad panes. But she would never have had the temerity to enter one of those. The little shop was different. She found it irresistible.

She had always loved flowers, and one of the never-to-be-realized visions that she cherished was of herself weeding in a bright-colored country garden patch. On the window sill of her fourth-story bedroom, she coaxed geraniums to bloom, and even once succeeded in inducing a sickly sprig of mignonette to raise its head from a tiny flowerpot. But the cut flowers in the little shop called to her, and she entered and was lost.

It was only three jonquils that she carried away—wrapped up, first, in oiled paper, and then in white—but it marked the beginning of a new period in her existence. Now that her tiny cemetery lot was paid for, now that her twenty-year life-insurance policy had fallen due, and a whole thousand dollars was hers to live on, should she ever be ill, now that she had a regular clientele for which to sew, so that five days and a half out of every week seemed assured to her as long as she could find glasses strong enough to enable her to count her stitches, why should she not permit herself another self-indulgence? Why should she not, selfishly, piggishly, buy herself a Saturday posy, to keep her company all Saturday evening, while she read her paper, and her magazine, and her Bible, and to be waiting to welcome her when she came home from church on Sunday morning?

"It wouldn't be quite like looking up to see an old mother smiling at you, or coming home to find a baby toddling to meet you, but next to them, I don't know of a thing that would be more smiling and companionablelike. I'm going to do it!"

She did not confide all this to Kate Green, who kept the little shop, until much later in their acquaintance. In the first place, Kate was generally busy on Saturday afternoons; the little shop

in which she had invested almost all the small inheritance that she had received at her mother's death, was doing very well. Kate explained blithely to people who exclaimed at the comparative cheapness of her wares that her rent was small compared to that of the big shops, and that her staff was correspondingly small. Indeed, there would not have been room in the little shop for any more or any larger employees than the agile small boy who executed Kate's orders.

All these things combined to make the venture a success, but probably the most potent factor in it was Kate herself; Kate, who loved flowers, and knew how to care for them; Kate, who always went in person at break of day to the flower marts, and brought back with her at least one rarity to make every one pause in front of her window that day; Kate, who was straight and strong looking, and who had lovely eyes, and lovely hair, and a soft, pulsating color in her round cheeks.

"Doesn't any one ever mistake you for a flower yourself?" inquired Mr. Reginald Ten Eyck pleasantly on the occasion of his first purchase, twenty-five dollars worth of big lilies to be sent to the Norwegian actress who was doing Ibsen that year in the most fascinating broken English.

Kate didn't have twenty-five dollars worth of lilies in the place, but she knew where she could get the rest. She frowned at Mr. Ten Eyck's complimentary impertinence, although Mr. Ten Eyck's manner always robbed his impertinences of some of their offense. She answered him somewhat curtly.

"No one ever mistakes me for the sort of person to whom he may be rude," she said.

A great wave of red rolled up over her face as she said it. It was no easy matter for her to "put a young man in his place," as her old servant at home had always declared it was necessary to do. Mr. Ten Eyck laughed.

"A hit," he cried. "A very palpable hit! You read Shakespeare, of course?"

Kate frowned again, and then advanced with relief toward a new cus-

tomer entering the shop. But Mr. Ten Eyck, who had ample leisure, and who would have taken it if he had not already possessed it, waited until the other customer had been served and had departed.

"I only stayed to apologize to you," he assured her, with much sincerity. "You really ought to read Shakespeare—he's ripping! I dare say you don't believe me, because they taught you that in school. But it's the truth—it's as true as that I'm really awfully sorry if my freshness annoyed you. Forgive me, won't you?"

Kate couldn't resist him. The severe mask had to fall away from her face, and the dimples to show.

"I forgive you," she said, trying to make the severity of her voice atone for the leniency of her face.

"Shake hands on it!" begged Mr. Ten Eyck.

Kate shook hands on it—it seemed the easiest way to get rid of him. But she scarcely succeeded in doing that. He became her regular customer; he laid the foundations of her modest success. Two and three times a week he appeared in person to inspect Kate's stock, to make suggestions, and to leave the most extravagant orders. In addition to that, he sometimes sent his man with less elaborate instructions.

The recipients of his floral attentions were many. Kate used to curl her lip as she took some of the addresses. In the beginning she had really almost felt the scorn that she thought it necessary to show, as actress after actress, chorus girl after chorus girl, appeared and disappeared upon Mr. Ten Eyck's list. Later, she began to feel a grudging curiosity about them. Was it pure fickleness that made so many changes in the names, or was it that the exigencies of their profession made New York their habitat for only a short time?

She took to scanning the newspapers for the names not only of stars, but of what might be called the mere electric lights of the theaters. She had a great feeling of relief the Monday when she read that the Norwegian interpreter of

Ibsen was playing her last six evenings and her last two matinées that week.

About the decorous addresses on Fifth and Madison Avenues, and the blocks between them, to which many of Mr. Ten Eyck's floral tributes were sent, she felt less curiosity, less—she did not call it so to herself—jealousy. "Bread-and-butter bouquets," Mr. Ten Eyck himself named the flowers that went to those houses, and Kate took a strange and alarming comfort in the saying. Even when he came into the shop with lovely and resplendent ladies in his company, and presented them to Kate with that air of friendliness, all unaware of class distinctions, that was his greatest charm, and told them how, if they wanted original and charming decorations, they must give their orders to Miss Green, his intimacy with those ladies did not disturb her. He never brought the others.

There came a day, a few weeks after Miss Mitty had entered upon her career of selfish extravagance in the matter of flowers, and had established a sort of friendship with the young florist, when the latter was compelled to question herself concerning the feelings that she cherished toward Mr. Ten Eyck. Neither he nor his man had been in for a week. Kate had read the society notes of her morning paper assiduously, but had discovered nothing of his whereabouts or activities. Cotillions were danced without his aid, débutantes made their bow to the world without his congratulations, chorus girls made merry without his help. Could he be ill, Kate wondered. She almost had it in her thoughts to put together a modest bunch of flowers, and to send it in a plain box to his address. But she took the inclination by the neck, so to speak, and shook it.

"Have you taken leave of your senses, Kate Green?" she asked herself, and forthwith plunged into plans for decorating Mrs. Montgomery's dinner table on the next Friday.

It was a wild, blustery, winter day, and the narrow door into the narrow little shop seldom opened. The telephone bell rang now and then, and or-



"No one ever mistakes me for the sort of person to whom he may be rude," she said.

ders were given without inspection of the flowers.

Kate's assistant had gone to one of the park hotels with a bunch of violets and orchids to welcome a girl just arriving from Chicago, and she herself was alone in the shop, when the old-fashioned bell on the front door jangled, and a man seemed blown into the little room.

Kate came from behind the desk with her competent saleswoman air, but before she had taken four steps into the store, she came to a standstill. It was

her chief customer, Reginald Ten Eyck, who stood still near the door, staring at her most curiously. She did not know why she was suddenly stricken motionless by the look of his pale face, the earnestness of his gaze. When he saw that she was not advancing, Mr. Ten Eyck took a few steps forward himself.

"Have you missed me?" he demanded, with an attempt at his usual airy manner.

Kate made a clutch after her own accustomed pose of good business woman

"You haven't been in for some time, have you?" she said pleasantly.

He came closer, and stood looking down at her, intent, brooding, yet with a little flicker of his old whimsicalness.

"Ah, Kate, Kate! And do you know why I have stayed away?"

Kate wanted to say the obvious thing about his having been busy, having been out of town, needing no flowers. But the words would not come. She stood looking up at him, and in her ears there was a throbbing that seemed to be all the voices of the world saying to her:

"And this is love!"

She shook her head in answer to his question.

"I've been trying to see how it would feel to get on without seeing you," announced Reginald Ten Eyck. "I find it feels like hell. I'll amend that to purgatory if the word shocks you." He stooped and suddenly caught her hands. "Kate, Kate, I can't stand it! Can you?"

Her hands imprisoned in his, her eyes fixed upon his ardent ones, her whole being in subjection to the new, sudden force that had taken possession of her, Kate shook her head. She didn't want to stand not seeing him! His face brightened and softened wonderfully.

"My dear girl! My dear, true-hearted girl! You shall never regret it—you shall never regret being sincere to me, I swear it! Where am I to see you? Where do you live? I shall come and take you to dinner to-night, and afterward you will let me come and talk to you in your own place."

The front door opened, and the messenger returned from the hotel, his red, outstanding ears nearly blown from his head.

"At five minutes past six then," said Ten Eyck, releasing her hands.

The door closed behind him, and Kate, dazed, palpitant with excitement and a dreamy happiness, went up behind the desk again.

She was alone again in the shop in the middle of the afternoon, when again the gale seemed to blow a customer into the shop. Kate came forward slowly, hating to break the trance

in which she was spending the day. But when she recognized Miss Mitty's funny little face, red, and frost-nipped, and watery-eyed from the buffeting of the wind, she smiled in friendly fashion.

"This isn't your regular day?" she said.

Miss Mitty, recovering her wind-blown breath with a final gasp, looked up with shy pleasure.

"And have you really noticed that I only come on Saturdays?" she said. "I call that very friendly of you. I don't hold with this notion, at all, of New York's not being a friendly place. People are pretty much as you take 'em, all the world over, is my belief. Well, Saturday is my usual day. It's the only afternoon I'm not sewing, or engaged to sew. But the lady where I'm working to-day, Mrs. Miller, over on Broadway, near Ninety-sixth, she's expecting her mother to-night from the country, and she was trying to find some sweet peas to put in her mother's room. It seems her mother has a garden up where she lives, and is awful fond of flowers, and can't abide flats. And so Mrs. Miller—but you understand all that. She couldn't find any sweet peas up near her place, and when I told her about you, and how you'd surely have 'em if they were in the market, she asked me to come down and see. That's how it happens."

"There were almost none in the market this morning," said Kate. "So many of the trains were late on account of the blizzard. But I got two or three bunches, and, with some lilies of the valley and mignonette, they'd make quite a gardeny showing."

She was busy sliding the glass doors of her cases back and forth.

"It's just what I told Mrs. Miller," cried Miss Mitty, in a rapture of self-satisfaction and satisfaction with Kate. "I said that if you didn't have sweet peas, you'd have something that would make her mother think of a garden. I told her—I hope you'll excuse my saying it—that you looked like a girl whose mother had had a garden. She did now, didn't she?"

Miss Mitty's voice yearned for corroboration.

"Yes," said Kate shortly and in a low voice.

She was busying herself with the arrangement of the flowers. Miss Mitty eyed her sympathetically.

"I hope you've got her with you," she ventured a little diffidently. "Mine died when I was a baby, and that's more than forty years ago. I can't tell you what I'd give to have an old mother to do for. I think it would be the sweetest thing, next to having a baby——" She broke off with a little laugh that was full of pathos. "Ain't I an old fool to be talking about babies? Why, I never even had a beau!"

Kate looked at her with tragic eyes. She did not know yet what the garrulous little woman had done. She only knew that the heavy warmth and sweetness of the trance that had enveloped her since morning was dissipated, gone, and that she was obliged to see the world again instead of the hazy dream, And in the foreground of that world there was a country garden, outside a little, white-painted cottage. And among the pinks and the sweet peas, the brave blue bachelors buttons, and the white phloxes, there moved a bent figure in a sunbonnet. From out of the shadow of that sunbonnet a pair of dark eyes followed Kate with adoring pride.

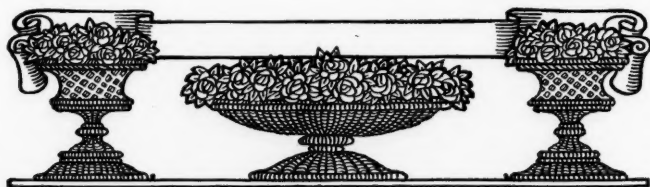
"Tommy," cried Kate, when the door had been closed long upon Miss Mitty, "I'm sick. I'm going home. There probably won't be any one in to buy anything on such an afternoon. If any orders come, call for messenger boys to take them. Do the best you can for me, Tommy, and don't tell any one where I live, if any one asks you. Mind, now!"

Two years later, Miss Mitty was surprised to be one of the tiny handful of guests invited to the wedding of Kate Green and Reginald Ten Eyck. It was a very quiet wedding, except for the jovial declarations of the elder Mr. Ten Eyck to the effect that nothing in his life had given him so much satisfaction.

"She's made a man of him," he assured his sister, who had sustained herself through the ceremony with smelling salts. "He's told me all about it. Wouldn't flirt with him, wouldn't go about with him, wouldn't have a damned thing to do with him, in short, until he proposed in due form, and declared that he'd defy the whole family rather than give her up. And she wouldn't have a thing to do with that, either, though she told him that she would have no scruples about the family part of it. But she wouldn't marry a trifler, an idler. Well, you know how Reggie hustled around and got a job, and how, by heck, he has seemed to like it better than all his loafing! She's made a man of him. I'm proud of her.

"Oh, stop your drivel about a saleswoman on the avenue! They're going to run the shop still; they'll supply it from the greenhouses up on the farm. Fine girl, plucky little woman! I tell you what, I'm proud of my son and daughter—I'll wager I'll have cause to be proud of my grandchildren!"

But Miss Mitty, in her modesty, never dreams that she, for all her loneliness, for all her lack of ties, has influenced the "ages hence" of which she sometimes wistfully dreams; and that it is not alone possessions, even the sacred possession of dear responsibilities, that influence the generations yet unborn, the centuries yet to be; but that these depend upon the vision that each one of us carries in his heart.



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The Man Inside

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ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

PROLOGUE.

THE long, hot, tropic day was drawing to its close. The shadows were gradually rising and filling the narrow street, and every now and then from the side of the open drain that ran through the middle of the street a large, black carrion bird flew up. There was no sidewalk, the cobblestones running right up to the low, white house walls. The windows that opened on the street were for the most part few in number, small, and heavily barred. It was not by any means the best quarter in Colon. One building, more pretentious than the rest, was distinguished from its neighbors by large French windows, also protected by the iron screen or *rejas*.

It was impossible to tell the nationality of the one man lounging along the street. He seemed profoundly buried in his own thoughts. Dark as his skin was, and black as was his beard, there was something about him that negated the idea that he was a Spaniard. His rolling walk suggested the sailor's life.

As he passed the building with the long French windows, the tinkle of a guitar roused his attention, and he stepped inside the front door, and glanced furtively at the few men who lounged about the tables that dotted the long room. Passing by several empty tables and chairs, the stranger seated himself in the corner of the room on the side farthest from the street, near a window that opened on a neglected garden. A tropical vine thrust its branches against what had once been a wood-and-glass partition which formed the

end of the room. The branches and leaves twined in and out among the broken panes of the window.

Some of the occupants of the room had glanced indifferently at the stranger on his entrance, but his haggard, unshaven face and worn clothing did not arouse their curiosity, and they again turned their attention to their wine.

The stranger, after contemplating the view from the window for some moments, leaned back in his chair, thrust his hands into his pockets, and stretched his long legs under the table; then indolently studied his surroundings. The men in the room were types of the born ne'er-do-weel. Lazy, shiftless, they had drifted to Colon to pick up whatever spoils might come their way during the construction of the Panama Canal. Drinking and gambling, gambling and drinking—the sum total of their lives!

As he studied the flushed, sodden faces, a sudden horror of himself and of his surroundings shook him. He passed a nervous hand over his damp forehead. Why had his memory played him so scurvy a trick? The past few years were not pleasant to contemplate, and the future even less so. He half started from his chair, then sank back and summoned the mozo. Quickly he gave his order in fluent Spanish, and waited impatiently for the man's return. He had been fortunate at the gaming table the night before, and could purchase a moment's respite from the torments of an elusive memory. Memory, in whose train follow the remembered joys of childhood, parents, and home! The stranger's strong hand trembled as

he stroked his beard. Why was he an outcast? For him alone there was no childhood, and no home; his thinking life began as a full-grown man. Was there to be no awakening?

In a few moments the mozo returned, and placed a glass and a bottle of liquor before him. The stranger hastily filled and drank. As the stimulant crept through his veins, a feeling of physical contentment replaced all other sensations, and, lighting a cigar, he was slowly sinking once more into reverie when from behind the partition he heard a voice:

"No names, please."

The words, spoken clearly in English, startled him from his abstraction. He glanced through the vine, and, himself unseen, saw two men sitting at a table. They had apparently entered the patio from another part of the house.

"Quite right. I approve your caution." The words were also in English, but with a strong foreign accent, and the speaker, a man of middle age and of fine physique, laid some papers on the table before them. "Where is the senator this evening?"

"He accompanied several members of the congressional party to inspect the plant of the quartermaster and subsistence departments, and on his return will dine with Major Reynolds and several other officers at the hotel."

"I see." The foreigner drummed impatiently on the table. "You were late in keeping your appointment."

"I had the devil's own time in finding this dive," returned the younger man; and as he moved his chair half around, the inquisitive stranger, peeping through the leaves of the vine, obtained a view of his boyish face. The weak mouth was partly hidden by a short black mustache; the features were well cut, and by some would have been called handsome.

The older man gave vent to a half-smothered chuckle.

"Goethals and Gorgas have reformed the Canal Zone, and the local government is trying to do the same with Panama; but, *por Dios*, drinking and

gambling continue *unnoticed* in Colon," he said dryly. "I find a room in this house most convenient during my short visits here. No 'gringo,'" he sneered, "dare show his face in this room."

The stranger settled down in his chair, which was wedged into the corner formed by the wall of the room and the wood-and-glass partition, until his head was screened from the two speakers by the thick foliage of the vine. The Spaniard and the Jamaican, who had occupied the table nearest him, had gone, and the few men who still lingered over their wine at the farther end of the room paid no attention to him. He could listen without being observed.

"So you believe that the people of Panama are already dissatisfied with their president?" inquired the younger man, whom the listener judged to be an American.

"I do," came the firm reply. "And but for the presence of *los tiranos del norte* here, there would have been already a *pronunciamento*."

"Then you think the time is ripe for carrying out your scheme?"

His companion nodded without speaking, and tugged at his gray imperial.

"If it is done at all it must be soon," he said finally. "American rule is not too popular here, and now is the time to act. And I pray God that I shall be spared to see the fruits of the *labor de los cochinos sucios* reaped by another nation."

He spoke with intense bitterness.

"And that nation?" questioned the other.

"Is better left unmentioned."

"You do not love my countrymen," exclaimed the American, drawing out his cigarette case, and passing it to his companion, who waved it away impatiently.

"Say, rather—hate," was the terse reply. "But I do not look on you as one of that nationality. Your mother was my dearly loved cousin, and Colombia boasts no prouder name than the one she bore before she married your father. By the love that you bear her

memory, I entreat you to assist me in this undertaking."

"I have promised," said the American gruffly. "I hear that Colombia intends accepting the ten million dollars offered by the United States for certain islands near Panama."

"Never!" The Colombian spoke with emphasis. "Our hatred lies too deep for that; it cannot be placated by an offer of 'conscience money,' no matter how great the sum."

"The more fools, you!" muttered the American, sotto voce.

"The revolt of Panama was followed by an insurrection in Colombia," continued the other, "and the government was overthrown. The American newspapers gave us a few paragraphs at the time. They did not mention that nearly one hundred thousand people were killed; that the horrors of civil war were augmented by pillage and murder. I was at the front with the troops, and in my absence from home, my wife and child were murdered by some insurgents. I tell you"—he struck the table a resounding blow with his clenched fist—"there is no Colombian living who would not gladly see the United States humiliated."

"It is easy to see that the people of Panama are jealous of the success of the Americans," commented the young man.

"Naturally. The United States has always advanced at the price of Latin America."

"How so?"

"Study your history. When the thirteen original States branched out, first came the 'Louisiana purchase,' land originally settled by the French. Then Florida, first settled by the Spanish, was bought by the United States. Later still, Texas seceded from Mexico, settled also by the Spanish. Then came the Mexican War, and Latin America lost the territory now known as New Mexico, Arizona, and California."

"Seems to me it would have been better if Colombia had accepted the original offer of the United States for the Panama Canal Zone."

"Why so? The United States offered

only a beggarly ten million. By waiting a year, the French concession would have expired, and the Colombian government would have received the forty million that the United States eventually paid the French company."

"Instead of which, you got nothing," remarked the American dryly; "and lost Panama into the bargain."

"Through underhand methods," began the other hotly, then checked himself. "Enough of the past. Have you a message for me?"

For reply, the young man drew out an envelope from an inside pocket, and handed it to his companion, who opened it and read the communication in silence.

"Good!" he said finally, tearing the note into infinitesimal pieces, and carefully putting them into his leather wallet, from which he first took several letters. "Give this to the ambassador immediately on your return, and this"—he hesitated for a perceptible second—"give at once to our mutual friend."

The American took the papers, and placed them securely in an inside pocket.

"Is that all?" he inquired.

"No." The Colombian drew out a small chamois bag, whose contents emitted a slight jingling noise as he handed it to his companion. "You may find this useful. No thanks are necessary, dear boy," laying his hand on the American's shoulder as the latter commenced speaking. "The death of my wife and child has deprived me of near relatives except you, and I propose to make you my heir." Then, to change the subject, he added quickly: "Is there no way to induce the senator to use his influence with Congress and the administration for disarmament and the curtailing of building more battle-ships?"

The American laughed disagreeably. "I think it may be done—in time."

The Colombian's face brightened.

"Splendid! If we can stop his fervid speeches in behalf of a larger standing army and navy, we shall have accomplished much. But how do you expect to alter his attitude?"

"Through a woman." The American's lips parted in an amused smile. "There's no fool like an old fool, and the senator is no exception to the rule."

"Indeed?" The Colombian raised his eyebrows. "And what has the woman to say in the matter?"

"Nothing. She emulates a clam."

The eavesdropper on the other side of the partition, who had caught most of the conversation, moved ever so slightly to stretch his cramped limbs, and then pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his heated face. As he did so, a small slip of paper dropped, unseen by him, from his pocket to the floor. A large black cat came softly over to him, and he lifted the animal up and placed her on the table before him. He stroked the purring feline, and listened intently to catch the conversation that drifted to him through the vine-covered, broken windowpanes. Apparently the two men were preparing to leave.

"Does the senator really think to marry?" asked the Colombian, as he picked up his hat.

"I judge so. He is obviously very much infatuated with the girl's unusual type of beauty. And, believe me, she thoroughly understands the art of managing men."

"Indeed? Who is the girl?"

"The young daughter of the famous Irish actress, Nora Fitzgerald. Senator Carew—"

Crash! The bottle and glass smashed in pieces. The eavesdropper did not stop to see the damage that he had done, but with incredible swiftness and stealth was out of the room and down the street before the irate proprietor had reached the deserted table.

"*Que hay?*" inquired the Colombian of the proprietor.

He and the American had rushed into the room and over to the window by which the eavesdropper had been sitting.

"A drunken Spaniard knocked the bottle and glass from the table, and cleared out without paying the damage," explained the proprietor in Span-

ish, as he signed to the mozo to sweep up the mess.

"What's that in your hand?"

"A card, señor, which I have just picked up from the floor."

"Let me have it."

"*Si, señor, con mucho gusto.*"

He handed the paper to the Colombian. The American looked over his companion's shoulder as the latter adjusted his eyeglasses and held up the visiting card so that both could see its contents. With staring eyes and faces gone white, they read the engraved inscription:

Mr. James Carew, Maryland.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE BALL.

"Fifty-four!" bellowed the footman through his megaphone for the sixth time, and he slanted his umbrella to protect his face from the driving rain which half blinded him. A waiting automobile, whose chauffeur had mistaken the number called, moved slowly off and gave place to a carriage and pair.

"Fifty-four," mumbled the coachman, checking his restive horses with difficulty.

The footman turned, touched his hat, and beckoned to Cynthia Carew, who stood waiting in the vestibule. With a rueful glance at the wet sidewalk, she gathered her skirts up above her ankles and, propelled by the sturdy arm of her escort, Captain Frederick Lane, was landed breathless at the carriage door.

"In with you," laughed Lane, as his umbrella was almost dragged from his hand by the high wind. "Your wrap is too pretty to be ruined." Cynthia was half lifted, half pushed, inside the landau. "Good night, my dearest."

The door slammed shut; the horses, weary of long standing, started forward at the sound, and raced around the corner into Massachusetts Avenue before the sleepy coachman could collect his wits.

Cynthia, on the point of seating herself, was flung toward the farther cor-

ner of the carriage by the sudden jerk. Instinctively she threw out her hand to steady herself, and her open palm encountered what was unmistakably a broad shoulder.

"Good gracious!"—recoiling and collapsing sideways on the seat. "Philip! How you frightened me!"

Then she settled herself more comfortably, and, with an effort, chatted on.

"The dance really was a great success—just our set, you know, some of the diplomatic corps, and a number of the officers from the barracks. I hated to leave so early"—regretfully—"but I had promised Uncle James. Mrs. Owen asked particularly for you, and was greatly put out because you did not appear. Honestly, Philip, I am very tired of trying to explain your sudden aversion to society. Why do you shun your friends?"

Not getting an immediate answer, she repeated her question more emphatically. Still no reply. The silence caught her attention. Turning her head, she scanned the quiet figure by her side.

The pelting rain, which beat drearily upon the carriage roof and windows, almost drowned the sound of rapid hoofbeats. The high wind had apparently extinguished the carriage lamps, and the dim street lights failed to illuminate the interior of the rapidly moving carriage. In the semidarkness, Cynthia failed to distinguish her companion's face.



The light fell on a livid face, and was reflected back from glazing eyes.

"It is you, Philip?" she questioned sharply, and waited an appreciable moment; then a thought occurred to her. "Uncle James, are you trying to play a practical joke?"

Her voice rose to a higher key.

Her question was ignored.

Cynthia caught her breath sharply. Suppose the man was a stranger? She shrank farther back into her corner. If so, how came he there? Intently she studied the vague outlines of his figure.

The landau was an old-fashioned vehicle built after a commodious pattern by a past generation, and frequently

used by Senator Carew on stormy nights, as the two broad seats would accommodate five or six persons with tight squeezing.

Cynthia clutched her wrap with nervous fingers. If the man had inadvertently entered the wrong carriage, the least that he could do was to explain the situation and apologize. But suppose he was drunk? The thought was not reassuring.

"Tell me at once who you are!" she demanded imperiously. "Or I will stop the carriage."

At that instant the driver swung his horses abruptly to the left, to avoid an excavation in the street, and as the wheels skidded on the slippery asphalt, the man swayed sideways and fell upon Cynthia. A slight scream escaped her, and she pushed him away, only to have the limp figure again slide back upon her.

He was undoubtedly drunk! Thoroughly alarmed, she pushed him upright, and struggled vainly to open the carriage door with her disengaged hand.

With a tremendous jolt, which again deposited the helpless figure on her shoulder, the carriage wheels struck the curb as the horses turned into the driveway leading to the porte-cochère of the Carew residence. As the horses came to a standstill, the front door was thrown open, and the negro butler hastened down the short flight of steps.

Cynthia, with one desperate effort, flung the man back into his corner, and, as the butler turned the stiff handle and opened the door, half jumped, half fell out of the landau.

"A man's in the carriage, Joshua," she cried. "See who it is!"

The servant looked at her in surprise, then obediently poked his head inside the open door. Unable to see clearly, he drew back, and fumbled in his pocket for a match box.

"Keep dem hosses still, Hamilton," he directed, as the coachman leaned down from his seat. Then he pulled out a match. "Miss Cynthia, yo' bettah go inter der house," glancing at the young girl's pale countenance. "I'll 'ten' to dis hyar pusson."

But Cynthia remained where she was, and peeped over the butler's shoulder. He struck a match, and held it in the hollow of his hand until the tiny flame grew brighter, then he leaned forward and gazed into the carriage.

The intruder was huddled in the corner, his head thrown back, and the light fell on a livid face, and was reflected back from glazing eyes. Cynthia's knees gave way, and she sank speechless to the ground.

"'Fore Gawd!" gasped Joshua. "It's Marse James—an' he's daid!"

CHAPTER II.

A MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY.

The portières were pulled aside. "Excellency, breakfast is served."

The servant bowed deferentially toward a figure standing in the bow window. As the announcement reached his ears in the musical language of his native tongue, the Japanese ambassador turned from the window, and hastened into the dining room.

A small pile of letters lay beside his plate, and he opened and read them as he leisurely ate his breakfast. Tossing aside the last note, he picked up the morning *Herald*, and his eyes glanced casually over the page, then stopped, arrested by a three-column heading:

SENATOR CAREW DEAD

A MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY.

MURDER OR SUICIDE?

The ambassador pushed aside his plate, and read the smaller type with growing interest.

During the cloudburst of last night, when the heavens themselves seemed to threaten Washington, a most mysterious crime was committed in the fashionable Northwest. United States Senator James Carew, of Maryland, one of the most distinguished and influential men in political and official circles, was found dead in his carriage early this morning.

Much mystery surrounds the case. The tragedy was not discovered until the arrival of the carriage at the Carew residence. Miss Carew, whom her uncle was escorting home from a dance, was completely prostrated from shock, and had to be carried to her room.

Owing to the lateness of the hour, with the paper already in press, only a few meager details could be learned by the special representative of the *Herald*.

Senator Carew was found by his butler, Joshua Dangerfield, huddled in a corner of the back seat of the carriage. Doctor Penfield, the coroner, was hastily summoned, as well as detectives from headquarters. While awaiting their arrival, the policeman on the beat had the horses unharnessed and taken to the stable, and left the carriage under the porte-cochère.

On the arrival of the coroner and the detectives, the body was removed from the carriage to the deceased's room in the Carew mansion. Doctor Penfield discovered that death was apparently due to a stab from a small, upright desk file, which had been thrust into the body with such force that the heavy-leaded, round base was pressed tightly against the clothes. The sharp point had penetrated to the heart, and death must have been instantaneous. The weapon in the wound prevented any outward hemorrhage, and Senator Carew bled internally.

These startling details but add interest to what promises to prove a mystery unique in the annals of crime.

Senator Carew and his family have resided here for many years, and have been prominently identified with official and residential society. The old Carew mansion, in Massachusetts Avenue south of Fourteenth Street, has been noted for its lavish hospitality. It was erected by Senator Carew's father, General van Ness Carew, shortly before the Civil War, and the foundations and walls were of such unwonted thickness that General Carew was pestered with inquiries as to whether he was not building a fortress!

The inmates of the senator's household are his widowed sister, Mrs. George Winthrop, her stepson, Philip Winthrop, and her niece, Miss Cynthia Carew, daughter of the late Philip Carew, a younger brother of Senator Carew.

Mrs. Winthrop is well known in Washington, having kept house for her brother since the death of his wife in 1881. Miss Cynthia Carew made her debut last December at a memorable ball which her aunt and uncle gave for her. Since then Miss Carew has received much attention, and is regarded as one of the most popular of the winter's debutantes.

Philip Winthrop has spent most of his life in Washington, and since his graduation from Princeton has been acting as private secretary for Senator Carew. He is a member of the Alibi, the Chevy Chase, and the Riding and Hunt Clubs, and is popular with his associates.

A fearless leader, an upright American, Senator Carew has served his country well, first as representative, then as senator. Possessing the confidence and friendship of the president as he did, it was frequently proph-

esied that he would be the power behind the throne in deciding many of the important issues now confronting the country. His inexplicable death is, therefore, a severe blow to many besides his immediate family.

The known facts at present point to murder or suicide. The negro driver, Sam Hamilton, has been arrested pending a closer examination.

The ambassador regarded the printed lines long and thoughtfully. Then his foot pressed the electric button concealed in the carpet under the table. The bell had hardly ceased to buzz before the well-trained servant was by his side.

"Send for my motor," came the brief order.

"It is already at the door, excellency."

The ambassador tossed his napkin on the table, pushed back his chair, and rose.

"My hat and coat," he directed, walking into the hall.

In a few minutes he stepped out into the vestibule, and filled his lungs with the delicious breeze that fanned his cheeks. No trace of the heavy storm of the night before was in the air. The sky was blue, and the May sunshine lit up the budding trees and shrubs. The feeling of spring and of new-born life was everywhere. The ambassador snapped off a spray of the honeysuckle that grew along the fence protecting his parking from his neighbor's, and tucked the spray in his buttonhole as he entered the waiting motor.

"Drive to the club," he directed briefly, as the car moved off.

CHAPTER III.

THE BROKEN APPOINTMENT.

Eleanor Thornton turned in bed, and stretched herself luxuriously. It was good to be young and to be sleepy. For a few seconds she dozed off again; then gradually she awoke, and, too comfortable to move, let her thoughts wander where they would. In her mind's eye, she reviewed the events of the past months, and, despite herself, her lips parted in a happy smile. She had come to Washington in November to visit her

friend, Cynthia Carew. Delighted with the reception accorded her, she had invited her cousin, Mrs. Gilbert Truxton, to chaperon her, and on her acceptance had rented a small furnished residence near Dupont Circle for the winter.

Mrs. Winthrop and Cynthia Carew, whom she had known at boarding school, had taken her everywhere with them, and her cousin, Mrs. Truxton, belonging as she did to an old, aristocratic family of the District, had procured her entrée to the exclusive homes of the "cave dwellers," as the residential circle was sometimes called.

Endowed as she was with the gifts of charm and tact, Eleanor's wild-rose beauty had made an instant impression, and she had been invited everywhere. The butler's tray had been filled with visiting cards that many newcomers, anxious for social honors, longed to have left at their doors.

Eleanor had been one of the older girls at Dobbs' Ferry during Cynthia's first year at that boarding school. They had taken an immense liking to each other, a liking that later had blossomed into an intimate friendship. After her graduation, she and Cynthia had kept up their correspondence without a break, and, true to her promise, given years before, she had left Berlin and journeyed to Washington to be present at Cynthia's début.

After the death of her mother, Eleanor had been adopted by an indulgent uncle, Mr. William Fitzgerald, of New York, and on his death had inherited a comfortable fortune.

The winter had brought numerous triumphs in its train, enough to spoil most natures. But Eleanor was too well poised to lose her head over adulation. She had sounded the depths of social pleasantries, and found them shallow. In every country that she had visited all men had been only too ready to be at her beck and call—except one. Her dreamy eyes hardened at the thought, and her soft lips closed firmly. She had made the advances, and he had not responded. A situation so unique in her experience had made an indelible impression. Angry with herself for

even recalling so unpleasant an episode, she touched the bell beside the bed; then, placing her pillow in a more comfortable position, she leaned back and contemplated her surroundings with speculative eyes.

Her individuality had stamped itself upon the whole room. A picture or two, far above the average; a few choice books whose dainty binding indicated a taste and a refinement quite unusual; one or two Chinese vases, old when the Revolutionary War began; an ivory carving of the Renaissance; a mirror in whose lustrous depths Venetian beauties had seen their own reflections hundreds of years ago—all these things were sure indication of study and travel, and of a maturity of thought and taste that, oddly enough, seemed rather to enhance Eleanor's charm.

A discreet knock sounded on her door.

"*Bon jour, mademoiselle,*" exclaimed the maid, entering with the breakfast tray.

"*Bon jour, Annette,*" responded Eleanor, rousing herself; then, lapsing into English, which her maid spoke with but a slight accent: "Put the tray here beside me. Must I eat that egg?"

She made a slight grimace.

"But, yes, mademoiselle." The Frenchwoman stepped to the window, and raised the Holland shade. "Madame Truxton gave orders to Fugé to tell the cook that he must send you a more substantial breakfast. She does not approve of rolls and coffee. I think she wishes you to eat as she does."

Eleanor shuddered slightly.

"Did—did she have beefsteak and fried onions this morning?" she inquired.

"But, yes, mademoiselle." Annette's pretty features dimpled into a smile. "And she ate most heartily."

"Not another word, Annette. You take away my appetite. Is Mrs. Truxton waiting to see me?"

"No, mademoiselle; she was up at six o'clock, and had her breakfast at half past seven." Annette paused in the act of laying out a supply of fresh

lingerie. "What have the Americans on their conscience that they cannot sleep in the morning?"

"You cannot complain of my early rising," laughed Eleanor, glancing at the clock, whose hands pointed to a quarter to twelve.

"Ah, mademoiselle; you have lived so long away from America that you have acquired our habits."

"You may take the tray away, Annette; I have even less appetite than usual to-day." Eleanor waited until it had been removed, then sprang out of bed. "Come back in fifteen minutes," she called.

When the maid returned, she was seated before her dressing table.

"What news to-day, Annette?" she asked, as the Frenchwoman, with skillful fingers, arranged her wavy hair, which fell far below her waist.

"Madame and Fugi—" began the maid.

"I don't want household details," broke in Eleanor impatiently. "Tell me of some outside news, if there is any."

"Oh, indeed, yes; news the most startling. Senator Carew—"

She paused to contemplate her handiwork.

"Well, what about him?" inquired Eleanor listlessly.

"He is dead."

"Dead!"

The hand glass slipped from Eleanor's grasp, and fell crashing to the floor. Annette pounced upon it.

"Oh, mademoiselle, the glass is broken! *Quelle horreur!*"

"Bother the glass!" Eleanor's foot came down with an unmistakable stamp. "Tell me at once of Senator Carew's death. I cannot believe it!"

"It is only too true." Annette was a privileged character, and deeply resented being hurried; also, her volatile French nature enjoyed creating a sensation. She had eagerly read the morning paper, and had refrained from telling Eleanor the news until she could get her undivided attention. "Senator Carew was found dead in his carriage early this morning, on his return from the dance at Mrs. Owen's." Annette

had no reason to complain; Eleanor was giving her full attention to the story. "He had been stabbed."

The maid's hand accidentally touched Eleanor's bare neck, and she felt the taut muscles quiver. Covertly she glanced into the mirror, and studied the lovely face. But Eleanor's expression told her nothing. Her cheeks were colorless, and her eyes downcast.

After a barely perceptible pause, Annette continued her story:

"The coachman has been arrested and—"

A knock interrupted her, and she hastened to open the door, returning in an instant with a note.

"Fugi says the messenger boy is waiting for an answer, mademoiselle."

Eleanor tore it open, and read the hastily scrawled lines:

DEAR ELEANOR: I suppose you have been told of last night's terrible tragedy. Cynthia is prostrated. She begs pitifully to see you. Can you come to us for a few days? Your presence will help us both. Affectionately,
CHARLOTTE WINTHROP.

Eleanor read the note several times, then walked thoughtfully over to her desk. She wrote:

DEAREST MRS. WINTHROP: It is awful. I will come as soon as possible. Devotedly,
ELEANOR.

"Give this to Fugi, Annette, then come back and pack my small steamer trunk."

As the maid hastened out of the room, Eleanor picked up a silk waist, preparatory to putting it on, but her toilet was doomed to another interruption.

"Well, my dear, may I come in?" asked a pleasant voice from the doorway.

"Indeed you may. Cousin Kate."

Eleanor stepped across the room, and kissed the older woman. Mrs. Truxton's ruddy face lighted with an affectionate smile as she returned the girl's greeting. She did not altogether approve of her young cousin—many of Eleanor's "foreign ways," as she termed them, offended her—but Eleanor's lovable disposition had won a warm place in her regard.



"Dead!" The hand glass slipped from Eleanor's grasp, and fell crashing to the floor.

Mrs. Truxton seated herself in one of the comfortable lounging chairs, and contemplated the disheveled room and Eleanor's Oriental silk dressing gown with disapproval.

"Do you know the time?" she inquired pointedly.

"Nearly one," answered Eleanor, as she discarded her dressing gown for the silk waist. "Lunch will soon be ready. I hope you have a good appetite."

"Yes, thank you. I've been out all the morning," reproachfully. "Mrs. Douglas has asked me to dine with her this evening, and I think, Eleanor, if it will not interfere with your arrange-

ments, that I will accept the invitation."

"Do so by all means," exclaimed Eleanor heartily. "I hope she won't talk you deaf, dumb, and blind."

"She is rather long-winded," admitted Mrs. Truxton tranquilly. "On the telephone this morning, she took up twenty minutes telling me of the arrival here of her nephew, Douglas Hunter—Good gracious, child"—as Eleanor's silver powder box rolled on the floor with a loud bang—"how you startled one!"

"I beg your pardon." Eleanor was some seconds picking it up, for her fingers fumbled clumsily. "What were you saying, Cousin Kate?" replacing the silver on the dressing table.

"Mercy, child, how inattentive you are! I was only remarking that Doug-

las Hunter is no stranger to Washington. He was raised here, as he belongs to one of the first families of Georgetown."

"I never heard of a 'second' family in Georgetown," smiled Eleanor. Then, seeing her cousin's offended expression, she hastily changed the subject. "Have you heard the shocking news of Senator Carew's"—she hesitated—"tragic death?"

"Indeed I have. Washington is talking of nothing else. Why are you packing, Annette?" as the servant entered.

"Mrs. Winthrop has just written, and

asked me to spend a few days with them," explained Eleanor hurriedly. "So suppose you invite Miss Crane to stay with you in my absence."

"Of course, you cannot very well decline to go," said Mrs. Truxton thoughtfully. "Still, I hate to have you mixed up in such an affair, Eleanor."

"Nonsense, Cousin Kate! You mustn't look at it in that light," Eleanor patted the fat shoulder nearest her affectionately. "Cynthia told me yesterday that Senator Carew had said he was going to discharge the coachman, Hamilton—a surly brute, I've always thought him—for drunkenness. I have no doubt that he committed the murder from revenge, and while under the influence of liquor."

"I sincerely trust that that is the correct solution of the mystery," Mrs. Truxton looked dubious. "But there has been one fearful scandal in that family already, Eleanor, and I very much doubt if Senator Carew was killed by a servant."

"Why, what do you mean?"

Eleanor wheeled around in her chair and faced her cousin abruptly.

"Time will show."

Mrs. Truxton shook her head mysteriously.

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed Eleanor impatiently.

As Mrs. Truxton opened her lips to reply, Annette reentered the room.

"Pardon, madame, you are wanted at the telephone." And as Mrs. Truxton lifted herself carefully out of her chair, and walked out of the room, she handed a package to Eleanor. "This has just come for you, mademoiselle; the boy who left it said there was no answer."

"Annette! Annette!" came Mrs. Truxton's shrill voice from the lower hall.

"Coming, madame, coming!"

And the maid hastened out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Left alone, Eleanor turned the sealed package over curiously. The address was written in an unknown hand. Quickly breaking the red sealing wax and tearing off the paper, she removed the pasteboard cover and a layer of

cotton. A startled exclamation escaped her as she drew out the contents of the box—a necklace of large rubies and smaller diamonds in an antique setting.

Eleanor, who knew the value of jewels, realized from their color and size that the rubies were almost priceless; and in the pure joy of beholding their beauty she laid the necklace in the palm of her left hand and along her bare arm. After contemplating the effect for a moment, a thought occurred to her, and she pulled out the remaining cotton in the box, and found at the bottom a small card. She picked it out, and read the message written on it:

The appointment was not kept. Well done.

The card fluttered to the floor unheeded. The pigeon-blood rubies made a crimson stain on Eleanor's white arm, strong wrist, and supple fingers.

CHAPTER IV.

MUTE TESTIMONY.

Douglas Hunter sighed involuntarily as he left busy Fourteenth Street, and walked down Massachusetts Avenue. Twelve years' absence makes a great difference in the ever-shifting population of Washington. He felt like another Rip van Winkle as he gazed at each passer-by in his search for a familiar face. Even the streets had changed, and he was almost appalled by the grandeur of some of the huge white palaces that had been erected by multimillionaires in Massachusetts and New Hampshire Avenues, and the Avenue of the Presidents.

He had spent part of the morning motoring about the city with one of his cousins, and the outward and visible signs of wealth had staggered him. What had become of the unpretentious, generous-hearted hospitality, of the Old World manners and the courtly greeting of the host and hostess who had ruled so long at the national capital? Had Mammon spoiled the old simplicity, and had Washington become but a suburb of New York and Chicago? It truly seemed as if plutocracy had displaced aristocracy.

As Douglas approached the Carew residence, he glanced keenly at the handsome old mansion, and at the numerous idlers loafing in the vicinity, drawn there by idle curiosity. A policeman stood on guard in the driveway, and a number of photographers loitered near by, cameras in hand, waiting patiently to snapshot any member of the Carew family who might incautiously venture out of doors.

The house itself, a handsome, square, red brick and stone-trimmed four-storied building, stood some distance back from the sidewalk, behind beautifully kept lawns divided by the carriage drive. The blinds were drawn, and the ominous black streamer over the bell presented a mournful spectacle. It was the finest residence in that once fashionable locality, and Douglas decided that he preferred its solid, homelike architecture to the more ornate and pretentious dwellings in other parts of the city. As the years went by, Senator Carew had added improvements until the residence was one of the most delightful in Washington.

As Douglas turned into the walk, a large touring car wheeled into the driveway, and, as it purred softly by him, he stepped back respectfully and raised his hat to the tired-faced man sitting alone in the tonneau. He did not need to glance at the small coat of arms of the United States emblazoned on the polished door, or at the two secret-service men following on their motor cycles, to recognize the distinguished occupant of the car.

As the motor stopped under the porte-cochère, the colored butler ran down the steps, and the president leaned forward and placed a note in the bowing and scraping negro's hand; then the big car continued on down the driveway and out into the street.

Douglas waited where he was for a few minutes before mounting the short flight of steps. The hall door was opened several inches on his approach, and Joshua solemnly extended his card tray, which Douglas waved aside.

"I called to see Mr. Brett. Is he here?" he asked.

"Yessir."

Joshua opened the door still farther, and inspected him carefully.

"Take my card to him, and ask if he can spare me a few minutes." And he dropped his card on the tray.

"Walk in, suh," exclaimed Joshua, impressed by Douglas' well-groomed appearance; then he hesitated, embarrassed by a sudden idea.

"I'll wait here," volunteered Douglas, stepping inside the square hall.

"All right, suh." Joshua closed the front door. "Just a moment, suh." And he stepped softly across the hall and into a room.

Douglas glanced about him curiously at the spacious rooms and lofty ceilings. It was a double house. To the right of the entrance was the drawing-room, and back of that another large room, which Douglas took to be the dining room, judging from the glittering silver pieces on a high sideboard of which he had a glimpse through the door leading into the square hall. Across from the drawing-room was the room into which Joshua had disappeared, and back of that a broad staircase that ran up to the top floor.

Douglas was idly gazing out of the glass panels of the front door when Joshua returned, followed by a middle-aged man with a keen, clever face.

"Is it really you, Mr. Hunter?" he asked, as they shook hands warmly. "I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw your card. Come this way." And he conducted Douglas into the room that he had just left, and closed the door softly behind them.

"When did you arrive in Washington?" he inquired, motioning Douglas to take a chair near the window, and dropping into one opposite him.

"Yesterday."

Douglas leaned back and studied his surroundings. His eyes traveled over the handsome carved rosewood bookcases that lined the walls, the large desk table, and the comfortable, leather-covered revolving desk chair. The desk silver, the droplights, and the large, upholstered davenport pushed invitingly before the huge fireplace, with its shin-

ing brass fire dogs and fender, all told a tale of wealth and artistic taste—two assets not often found together. His eyes returned to Brett, and he smiled involuntarily as he caught the other intently regarding him.

Brett smiled in return.

"I was wondering why you looked me up so soon," he admitted candidly. "Don't think I'm not glad to see you," hastily; "but I remember of old that you seldom do things without a motive."

"On the contrary, I am here this afternoon to find a motive—for Senator Carew's tragic death." The smile vanished from Douglas' clear-cut features. "One moment!" as Brett opened his mouth to speak. "After reading the account of the senator's death in the morning papers, I went down to headquarters to get what additional facts I could, and they told me that you had been put on the case. So I decided to look you up in person, and here I am."

"May I ask why you take such an interest in this case?"

"Certainly, Brett. I was coming to that. Senator Carew used his influence to get me into the diplomatic service, and during the past twelve years he has shown me many kindnesses, such as seeing that I was detailed to desirable posts, and so forth."

"He wouldn't have done that, Mr. Hunter, if you hadn't made good," broke in Brett quickly.

"I saw him last at Delmonico's, in New York, on my way to Japan, a little over a year ago," continued Douglas. "He asked me to lunch with him, and evinced great interest in the mystery of the jewel-custom fraud, which he, in some way, knew that I had had a hand in exposing."

"Sure he did. I told the department about your assistance when I was in Paris. If it hadn't been for you, I'd never have landed those swindlers. They led me a pretty dance over the Atlantic."

"We worked together then," said Douglas thoughtfully, "and on the strength of our past success, I'm going

to ask you to take me on as a sort of advisory partner in this Carew case."

"Suppose you first tell me your reason for making such a request."

"In the first place, I owe a debt of gratitude to Senator Carew. For the sake of his friendship with my father years ago, he has taken a great interest in me. Secondly, I am in Washington at his request."

Brett looked his interest, and Douglas went on rapidly:

"Some time ago I received a note from him asking me to apply for leave of absence from Tokyo, and to come direct to Washington, saying that he wished to see me on important business."

"Did he state the nature of that business?" inquired Brett eagerly.

"No. I at once followed his suggestion, and applied to the state department for leave. It was granted, and I hastened home as fast as steamer and train could bring me."

"Did you see Senator Carew?"

"Unfortunately, no. I reached Washington late last night. I expected to see the senator this morning. Instead of which, I read of his mysterious death in the morning papers."

Brett mused for a few minutes, then roused himself.

"I am only too glad to have your assistance, Mr. Hunter."

"Good!" ejaculated Douglas, well pleased. "Suppose you tell me all the facts in the case, so far discovered."

Brett leaned back in his chair, and crossed his legs.

"On the face of things, it looks as if the negro driver, Hamilton, were guilty."

"Tell me what leads you to think that," inquired Douglas quickly.

"He is the worst type of negro, a vicious brute with a taste for liquor. I have inquired about him, and examined him thoroughly, and am really puzzled, Hunter, to find out why Senator Carew ever employed him."

"Is he an old family servant?"

"No; he has been in Carew's employ only about a year, I am told. He knows

how to handle horses, and took excellent care of the senator's stable."

"That probably explains why he was kept on," said Douglas. "I've been told that Carew was hipped about his horses."

"Yes. I gathered from Mrs. Winthrop that Hamilton has been drinking steadily, and that his conduct to the other servants had grown intolerable. Senator Carew had to discharge him."

"When did that happen?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"Then how was it that he was driving the carriage last night?"

"Oh, Carew gave him a week's notice—said he couldn't fill his place at once, and told him to stay on. Joshua tells me that Hamilton uttered some ugly threats in the kitchen last evening, but that the servants paid no attention to his black humor, as they saw he had been drinking."

"I see in the papers that Hamilton vehemently declares his innocence."

"He does," agreed Brett, checking his remarks off on his fingers. "He declares that he did not see Senator Carew after being discharged by him; that no one was in the carriage when he drove away from the stable at midnight; that he went directly to Mrs. Owen's residence; and that he does not know when or how Senator Carew's body was secreted in the carriage."

"The plot thickens," muttered Douglas. "Do you believe his statements?"

"I do and I don't. The servants all declare that he was half drunk, therefore I doubt whether he was in a condition to pay much attention to anything, or whether his statements can be relied on. He was sobered by the shock of finding Carew's body in his carriage, and when I arrested him collapsed from fright."

"Well, judging from the facts you have just told me, I don't much believe he killed Carew."

"Why not?" argued Brett. "Hamilton was apparently half out of his mind from rage and drink, and his brute nature made him seek revenge. It's quite possible Carew entered the carriage, thinking that it would not be safe for

his niece to drive home alone from the dance, and Hamilton took that opportunity to kill him."

"I read in the evening paper that Hamilton was told to stop at the house for one of the maids, but, instead, drove directly from the stable to the dance," said Douglas. "Therefore, Carew did not enter the carriage at this door."

"Hamilton may have been too befogged with drink to have remembered the order."

"I grant you, Brett," said Douglas thoughtfully, "that the negro may have the nature, the desire, and the opportunity to commit murder—but why select such a weapon?"

"Probably picked up the first thing at hand," grunted Brett.

"But a desk file is not 'the first thing at hand' in a stable," remarked Douglas calmly. "In fact, it's the last thing you would expect to find there."

"I don't know about that. Perhaps it was thrown away in a waste-paper basket, and Hamilton may have picked it out of the ash pile," suggested Brett.

"What did the file look like?"

"It is of medium size; the slender steel is very sharp; the round, solid base is of silver. I've shown it to several jewelers, and they all say it's like hundreds of others—rather expensive, but popular with their well-to-do customers—and that they have no means of tracing it back to any particular owner. It was something like that one," pointing to an upright file on Senator Carew's desk.

Douglas leaned over and took it up.

"An ideal weapon," he said softly, balancing it in his hand as his fingers closed over the round, heavy base. He removed the cork that was used to guard the sharp point, and felt it with his thumb. "It must have taken a shrewd blow to drive the file through overcoat and clothing so that it would cause instant death."

"The senator wore no overcoat."

Douglas looked his surprise. After a moment's silence, Brett edged his chair closer to his companion, and lowered his voice.

"You recollect how it rained last night?"

"In torrents. I have seldom seen such a cloudburst," admitted Douglas.

"It commenced to rain about thirty," continued Brett, "and it did not stop until after three o'clock. Hamilton drove twice in that drenching rain to Mrs. Owen's and back again, first taking Miss Carew to the dance and then returning with her. Senator Carew's body was discovered on the last trip home. Miss Carew told her aunt that no one was in the carriage with her when she made the first trip to the dance. Senator Carew's body was not removed until after my arrival here this morning, and I then made a thorough examination of the carriage, and, with the coroner's assistance, of the body as well." He paused, and cleared his throat. "I found that Senator Carew's clothes were absolutely dry. As I said before, he wore no overcoat. Now, how did Carew get into that carriage in that soaking downpour without getting wet?" asked Brett, settling back in his chair.

"Perhaps he was first murdered, and then carried out and put into the carriage?"

"Perhaps so; but I doubt it."

"He may have entered the carriage at the stable when Hamilton was not around?"

"I thought of that," returned Brett, "and as soon as it was daylight examined the yard and the alley. The concrete walk from the house to the stable is being laid now, and cannot be used, so that one has to tread on the ground, which is extremely soft and muddy. The alley is a long one, and Carew's stable is about in the center of it, and the rain, settling in the holes of the uneven cobbles, made walking very unpleasant. I am telling you all these details because of another discovery," went on Brett slowly. "The senator's shoes had been recently polished, and the blacking was not even stained."

Douglas leaned back and bit his thumb nail, a childish habit of which he had never been able to break himself.

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"Where did Carew spend the evening?" he asked finally.

"That is what I have not been able to find out," growled Brett. "Mrs. Winthrop told me that she had not seen her brother since breakfast; that he went to the capitol as usual in the morning. She was told, on entering the house just before dinner, that he would not return for that meal, but that he had not stated where he was going."

"Upon my word, it's a very pretty problem!" commented Douglas softly.

"It is," agreed Brett, rising and slowly pacing the room.

He glanced piercingly at Douglas, who was thoughtfully contemplating a life-size portrait of one of Carew's ancestors which hung above the mantel over the fireplace. Douglas Hunter's clear-cut features, broad forehead, and square jaw indicated cleverness and determination. When Douglas smiled, the severe lines relaxed, and his smooth-shaven face was almost boyish. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, which prevented him from taking himself too seriously. In the past, Brett had conceived a high regard for the other's quick wit and indomitable courage.

"This is Senator Carew's study or library," Brett said, stopping before the desk, "and I was giving the room my special attention when you came in."

"Have you met with any success?" inquired Douglas quickly.

"So far, only one thing; it may be a clew or it may not. Under this writing pad, I found this blotter," holding up a square white sheet. "It has been used only once, first on one side, then on the other, so that by holding it in front of this mirror you can read quite clearly. See—"

Douglas rose, stepped behind Brett, and peeped over his shoulder into the silver-mounted mirror that the latter had removed from its place on the mantel.

The large, bold writing was fairly legible.

"What do you make out of it?" asked Brett impatiently.

Obediently Douglas read the words aloud:

"Am writing in case I don't see you before you——"

There the writing broke off. "He must have been interrupted," explained Brett, "and clapped down the blotter on top of the sheet, so that whoever entered couldn't see the written words. Now look at the other side." And he turned up the other side of the blotter, on which only a few words were traced.

"I have discovered——"

read Douglas.

"What do you think of it?" asked Brett, putting the blotter into an inner pocket of his coat.

"It depends on when it was written." Douglas' eyes strayed to the door. Surely Brett had closed it when they had entered; now it stood partly open into the hall. He pointed silently to it, and by common impulse both men stepped out into the hall.

Listening intently, they heard a faint rap on one of the doors in the upper hall. Then a high-pitched, quivering voice reached them:

"Eleanor, Eleanor! I'm so glad you've come! I'm nearly sick with misery. They quarreled, Eleanor; they quarreled——"

The voice caught in a sob; the door slammed shut.

The two men glanced at each other, their eyes asked the same question. Who quarreled?

CHAPTER V.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

A slight sound behind him caused Douglas to wheel swiftly around. A pretty woman, with astonishment written largely in her round eyes, stood regarding the two men. She was carrying a hand bag.

"Whom do you wish to see?" asked Brett sharply.

"No one, monsieur," replied Annette, her accent denoting her nationality. "I am Miss Thornton's maid."

Douglas started. "Eleanor"—"Miss Thornton"—was it possible that she could mean *the* Eleanor Thornton whom he used to know?

"I am taking her bag to her room, as she is spending the night here," added the servant.

"Indeed!" Brett inspected her keenly. "When did Miss Thornton enter the house?"

"A few minutes ago, monsieur," vaguely. "Joshua showed mademoiselle in while I stopped a moment to speak with the chauffeur, and he left the front door open so that I could enter."

At that moment the butler appeared from the dining room, carrying a tray, on which were glasses and a pitcher of ice water.

"Joshua, is this Miss Thornton's maid?" asked Brett.

"Yessir." Joshua ducked his head respectfully as he answered the detective. "Annette, Miss Eleanor done hab her same room next do' ter Miss Cynthia's. Yo' kin take her things right upstairs, an' tell Miss Eleanor I done got der ice water fo' her."

With a half curtsy, Annette stepped past the two men, and ran quickly up the stairs.

"Stop a moment, Joshua," ordered Brett, as the butler started to follow the maid. "Who opened the door into the library a few moments ago?"

"'Deed, I dunno, suh; I been so busy takin' in cyards I ain't noticed particular."

"Who has been in the hall beside yourself?" persisted Brett.

"Ain't no one," began Joshua, then paused. "Now, I do recollect dat Marse Philip cum in right smart time ergo, suh. He axed fo' yo', and I tole him yo' was in de lib'ry. I 'specks he mighter been a-lookin' fo' yo'."

"Ah, indeed! Where is Mr. Winthrop now?"

"I dunno, suh."

"Well, find him, Joshua, and tell him I wish to see him—at once."

Brett's pleasant voice had deepened, and Joshua blinked nervously.

"Yessir, I'll tell him, suh, 'deed I



"What's all this questioning about?" he demanded loudly. "I've had enough of this, you——" His hands clenched, and the blood flamed his pale face.

will," he mumbled as he started upstairs.

As Douglas and Brett walked across the hall to enter the library, a man stepped out of the drawing-room.

"Are you looking for me, Mr. Brett?"

The question was asked courteously enough, and Douglas was the more astonished to encounter a hostile stare as the newcomer glanced at him.

"I hope you can give me a few minutes of your time," said Brett. "Will you be so good as to step into the library?"

He stood aside to allow Philip Winthrop to enter first. Douglas followed them into the room, and locked the

door. As the key clicked slightly, Winthrop frowned and his pale face flushed.

"That is only a precaution against eavesdroppers," explained Douglas quickly.

"Mr. Winthrop, this is Mr. Douglas Hunter, who is assisting me in my efforts to unravel the mystery surrounding Senator Carew's death, and who, with your permission, will be present at this interview."

"Why, certainly," exclaimed Winthrop, with well-simulated heartiness. "Won't you both sit down?"

He dropped into the revolving desk chair. Douglas picked out his old seat in the window, and turned his back to

the light, the better to face Winthrop and Brett, who also sat near the desk.

"When will they hold the inquest, Mr. Brett?" questioned Winthrop.

"The coroner, Doctor Penfield, told me to-morrow."

"Has Hamilton a lawyer to look out for his interests?"

"That's not absolutely necessary at the inquest, Mr. Winthrop. At present, the negro is held simply on suspicion. If the inquest so decides, he will be charged with the murder, and held for the grand jury."

Douglas had been busy scanning Winthrop intently. He noted the heavy lines in the handsome face and the unnatural brilliancy of the eyes. It was apparent to both men, by Winthrop's thick speech and unsteady hands, which kept fingering the desk ornaments nervously, that he had been drinking heavily.

"Where did you last see Senator Carew?"

"In this room, yesterday afternoon."

"Did you see him alone, or were others present?"

"He was alone."

"Did he show you a letter he was then writing?" inquired Douglas at a venture, and was startled at the effect of his question on Winthrop. The latter whitened perceptibly, and pulled his short black mustache to hide his twitching lips.

"I know nothing about any letter," he stammered.

Brett did not press the point, but asked instead:

"Where did you spend last night?"

"I dined here with my mother and cousin."

"And afterward?" put in Douglas.

"I went to the Alibi Club soon after dinner."

"How late did you stay there?"

"Most of the night," was the evasive reply.

"Please mention the exact hour you left the club," persisted Brett.

"I really cannot recollect the exact time. I did not reach this house until after two this morning. We had a pretty gay time at the club, and I was

in no condition to remember the hour." And he smiled deprecatingly.

Again Brett did not press the question. He turned over the pages of the small memorandum book in which he had been making entries.

"Have you any idea where your uncle dined and spent the evening?"

"No," came the emphatic answer.

"He asked me to tell my mother not to expect him at dinner; that was all."

"Ah, indeed! Have you any idea when Senator Carew left the house?"

"No; I left him here, and went up to my room, where I stayed until dinner was announced."

"Where is your room?"

"Third floor back."

"Who has rooms on the next floor?"

"Senator Carew's bedroom, bath, and sitting room are over this part of the house. My cousin, Miss Cynthia Carew, occupies the suite of rooms across the hall from his rooms. My mother and I have the third floor to ourselves."

Winthrop plucked nervously at the desk pad. "Talking is dry work; won't you and Mr. Hunter join me? I'll ring for Joshua."

"One moment." Brett's tone was peremptory, and with an unmistakable scowl Winthrop sank down in his chair and leaned heavily on the desk. "What members of the family were in the house yesterday afternoon?"

Winthrop thought for a moment before replying.

"No one but my uncle and myself," he said reluctantly. "My mother and Miss Carew went out early to some bridge party and did not return until just before dinner."

"I see."

Brett leaned back in his chair and contemplated Winthrop thoughtfully.

"Mr. Winthrop," asked Douglas, breaking the short silence, "were you and your uncle always on good terms?"

"Why, yes."

Winthrop's twitching fingers closed unconsciously on the slender desk file, and as he spoke his shifting eyes dropped from Douglas' clear gaze, and fell on the sharp steel desk ornament in his hand. With a convulsive shud-

der, he dropped it and sprang to his feet.

"What's all this questioning about?" he demanded loudly. "I've had enough of this, you—"

His hands clenched, and the blood flamed his pale face—a gurgle choked his utterance—and before Brett could reach him he fell prone across the desk.

CHAPTER VI.

A PIECE OF ORIENTAL SILK.

"I'm glad you could come back, Mr. Hunter," said Brett, as Joshua opened the library door of the Carew residence and admitted Douglas. "Can you stay here all night?"

"If necessary," replied Douglas, glancing at him in surprise.

"I think it would be best. Mrs. Winthrop is completely unstrung; her niece, Miss Carew, is prostrated from shock; and Mr. Philip Winthrop is in bed with a bad attack of delirium tremens. In such a household, your presence to-night might be invaluable if anything else were to happen. Not that I am anticipating any further trouble or tragedies."

"Very well, I will stay," agreed Douglas.

"Deed I'se mighty glad ter hyar dat," volunteered Joshua, who hovered just inside the door, on the pretext of arranging some furniture. "But I dunno whar I'll put yo', suh. Miss Eleanor, she's in de gues' chambah, an' Annette's in de room back ob hers, and de nusses fo' Marse Philip has der spar' rooms in der third flo'."

"Never mind, Joshua, I can camp out in this room. That sofa looks very comfortable." And Douglas pointed to the large, upholstered davenport that faced the empty fireplace.

"Just a moment, Joshua," exclaimed Brett, as the old butler moved toward the door. "Did you see Senator Carew leave the house yesterday afternoon?"

"No, suh."

"Did he take luncheon here?"

"No, suh. He cum in 'bout three o'clock; leastways, dat was when he

rung fo' me, an' I reckon he'd only jes' arrived, 'cause he had his hat an' coat on his arm."

"What did he want with you?"

"He axed me why Hamilton hadn't called fo' him at de capitol as o'dered; an' when I tole him dat Hamilton was a-sittin' in de stable doin' nuffin', he said I was ter go right out an' send him to de library—which I done."

"Did you see Senator Carew after that?"

"Yessir. After 'bout fifteen minutes, Hamilton cum out lookin' mighty black an' mutterin' under his breff. Den Marse James rung fo' me ag'in, an' sent me to tell Marse Philip dat he wanted ter see him to onst."

"Was there anything unusual in Senator Carew's manner?" inquired Douglas, who had been listening attentively to the old dorky's statements.

"He seemed considerable put out, dat was all," responded Joshua, after due reflection.

"Was Senator Carew irritable and quick-tempered?"

"Mostly he was real easy-going, but sometimes he had flare-ups, an' den it was bes' ter keep outer his way."

"Did you find Mr. Winthrop?"

"Yessir. I gib him de message, an' he went right down to de lib'ry."

"Do you know how long Senator Carew and Mr. Winthrop remained in this room?"

"No, suh. I went ter de fron' do', an' while in de hall I heard a regular ruction goin' on inside dis room."

"Could you hear what was said?" demanded Brett eagerly.

Joshua shook his head.

"I couldn't make out a word, but Marse James' voice was powerful riz, an' Marse Philip's, too."

"Was that the first time that Senator Carew and Mr. Winthrop have quarreled?"

"Dey had words now and den," muttered Joshua evasively.

"About what?" broke in Douglas sharply.

"Oh, nuffin' in particular. Marse James uster get mad with Marse Philip 'cause he wore so lazy, an' den he's

been a-drinkin' right smart, which Marse James didn't like, nuther."

"Is Mr. Winthrop a heavy drinker?"

"No, suh; but he's been a-drinkin' pretty steady fo' de pas' three months."

"Have you any idea, Joshua, what caused the quarrel yesterday afternoon?"

"Well, it mighter started over Hamilton. Marse Philip persuaded Marse James to keep him las' fall when he was 'bout to discharge him fo' bein' impertinent."

"Did Senator Carew give you a letter to mail yesterday afternoon or a note to deliver for him?" inquired Douglas thoughtfully.

"No, suh, he did not," Joshua declared, with firmness.

"How long have you been with Senator Carew, Joshua?"

"'Most thirty years, suh. I worked fust fo' his father, der ole ginerel. Ef yo' doan' want me fo' nuffin' mo', gen'men, I reckon I'll go an' close up de house fo' de night."

"All right, Joshua."

And the butler beat a hasty retreat.

Douglas took out his cigarette case and handed it to Brett.

"Formed any new theory?" he asked, striking a match and applying it to the cigarette between his lips.

Brett did not answer at once.

"The inquest will make Winthrop and Joshua talk. I am convinced that neither of them has told all that he knows of this affair," he said finally.

Douglas nodded in agreement.

"But the inquest will have to be postponed now. Winthrop is in no shape to appear before it."

"And Miss Carew, who is an equally important witness, is still confined to her bed," volunteered Brett. "Miss Thornton tells me that she cries whenever the subject of the murder is mentioned, and that she is completely unstrung by the tragedy."

"By the way, who is this Miss Thornton?" asked Douglas. "And what does she look like?"

"She is a cousin of Mrs. Truxton, of Georgetown."

Douglas whistled in surprise. Brett

glanced at him sharply, then continued: "I am told that she is Miss Carew's most intimate friend, although about five years older. Miss Thornton must be about twenty-three. She is tall and dark, and has the most magnificent blue eyes that I have ever seen in a woman's head."

Douglas drew in his breath sharply.

"It must be the girl whom I knew in Paris, but I had no idea then that she was related to old family friends of mine in Georgetown." He changed the conversation abruptly. "Come, Brett, what theory have you formed?" he asked again, with more emphasis.

"I think that both Winthrop and Hamilton have a guilty knowledge of Senator Carew's death, but how deeply Winthrop is implicated we have yet to learn."

"But the motive?" argued Douglas. "It is highly improbable that Winthrop killed the senator because he discharged a worthless servant."

"If we could find that letter, which I am convinced the senator was writing when Winthrop entered the room yesterday afternoon, we would know the motive, fast enough," retorted Brett.

"Have you searched Carew's belongings?"

"Yes, all of them, and all the furniture in his bedroom, sitting room, and bath, as well as the rooms on this floor; but I couldn't find a trace of it. I have also thoroughly searched his office at the capitol."

"Did you think to examine the landau? The senator might possibly have tucked the letter under the carriage seat."

"I thought of that, and examined the interior of the carriage, but there is no possible place where a letter could be concealed. The carriage has recently been reupholstered in leather, and there's no crack or tear where an envelope could slip through."

"Have you inquired at the different messenger services in town?"

"Yes, but there is no record at any of their offices that Senator Carew sent for a messenger to deliver a note yesterday afternoon or night. I also sent

word to the post-office officials asking to have an outlook kept and a search made for a letter franked by Senator Carew and postmarked yesterday."

"It's exceedingly doubtful whether you get any results from that quarter, when you don't know when or where such a letter was posted or to what city it was addressed."

"The frank may help." Brett glanced at the clock. "Eleven-thirty—I must be going." He rose. "Did you meet with any success, Mr. Hunter, in the inquiries you said you would make this afternoon?"

"In a way, yes. Winthrop was at the Alibi Club, taking supper with Captain Stanton. But Julian Wallace, who was one of the party, told me that he, Winthrop, left the club about twelve-thirty."

Brett whistled.

"And he did not reach this house until three hours later! I am afraid that friend Winthrop will have much to explain when he recovers his senses."

"Hold on! The Carew carriage returned here a few minutes before one o'clock—when the senator was found dead inside it. That left Winthrop less than half an hour to get from the club to Mrs. Owen's residence—a considerable distance—and commit the murder."

"It's not impossible for a man in a motor," declared Brett sharply.

"I thought that Senator Carew kept only horses," exclaimed Douglas.

"And so he did; but Winthrop owns a small roadster. I was here at the house when he arrived this morning. The machine has a cover and a windshield, so he was fairly well protected from the rain. As I said before, Winthrop will have much to explain. I hope you will have an undisturbed night, Mr. Hunter. I told Joshua and the nurses to call you if anything is needed."

"Don't worry about me," laughed Douglas, as the two men stepped into the hall. "I've camped out in much worse places than this room."

"Well, good night! I'll be here the first thing in the morning."

And Brett pulled open the door and ran down the steps.

As Douglas replaced the night latch on the front door, Joshua joined him.

"I brunged yo' dis 'comfort'," raising a soft eider-down quilt that he carried tucked on his left arm. "I thought yo' might like it over yo' on der sofa."

"Thanks very much," exclaimed Douglas, taking it from him.

Joshua followed him to the library door.

"I ain't goin' ter bed," he explained. "I couldn't sleep nohow." The soft, drawing voice held a touch of pathos. "Marse James was mighty kind ter me—an' thirty years is a mighty long time ter be 'sociated in de fambly. So I jes' reckon I'll sit on der window seat in der hall. Ef yo' want anythin', jest let me know, Marse Hunter."

"All right, Joshua. I'll leave this door open, so you can call me if I am needed. Good night!"

Douglas placed the door ajar, and walked over to the well-filled bookcases. After some deliberation, he selected a book and sat down in the revolving chair. The book held his attention, and he read on and on. As he finished the last chapter and tossed the volume on the table, he glanced at the clock, the dial of which registered two-thirty. The upholstered davenport, which stood with its back resting against the length of the desk table, looked inviting, and Douglas rose, extinguished the light, and walked over and lay down. After placing several sofa cushions under his head, he pulled the eider-down quilt over him, as he felt chilly.

The added warmth and the softness of the couch were most grateful to his tired body. He was drowsily conscious of the clock striking; then his last thought was of Eleanor Thornton—beautiful Eleanor Thornton. Strange that they should meet again! Why, he had actually run away from her in Paris! A few minutes more and he was sound asleep.

Some time later, Douglas opened his sleepy eyes, then closed them again drowsily. The room was in total dark-



Joshua groped his way to the button and switched on the light.

ness. As he lay listening to the tick-tock of the clock, he became conscious that he was not alone in the room. Instantly he was wide awake. He pulled out his match box, only to find it empty. As he lay a moment, debating what he should do, a soft, small hand was laid on his forehead. He felt the sudden shock that his presence gave the intruder, for the fingers tightened convulsively on his forehead, then were hastily removed. He threw out his

hands to catch the intruder, but they closed on empty space.

Swiftly and noiselessly Douglas rose to his feet and stepped softly around the end of the davenport, hands outstretched, groping for what he could not see. Suddenly, his eyes growing accustomed to the darkness, he made out a shadowy form just ahead of him, and darted forward. His foot caught in the long wire of the desk telephone, and, dragging the instrument clatter-

ing with him, he fell forward, striking his face and forehead against the edge of the open door.

"Fo' de lub ob Hebben!" gasped Joshua, awakened out of a sound sleep, and scared almost out of his wits. "Marse Hunter! Marse Hunter! Whar yo' at?"

"Here," answered Douglas. "Turn on the hall light, then come to me."

Obediently, Joshua groped his way to the button and switched on the light, after which he hastened into the library and did the same there. Douglas, who sat on the floor nursing a bleeding nose, blinked as the strong light met his dazed eyes.

"Did you see any one leave this room, Joshua?" he demanded.

"No, suh." The butler's eyes were rolling about to an alarming extent, showing the whites against his black face, which had grown gray with fright. "Twarn't no one ter see—it must ter been a haint."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Douglas heatedly. The telephone bell was keeping up a dull clicking, as the sleepy central tried to find out what was wanted, and he leaned over and picked up the instrument, replacing the receiver on the hook. "No ghost put out your hall light, and no ghost wears clothes. I caught the intruder's gown, and if it hadn't ripped away I'd have caught her."

As he spoke, he opened his right hand and disclosed a torn piece of Oriental silk.

CHAPTER VII.

KISMET.

"Good morning, Uncle Dana!"

The tall, distinguished-looking, gray-haired man standing in front of the mantel wheeled around, with a visible start of surprise.

"Good Lord, Eleanor! I didn't hear you enter the room. How silently you move, dear."

Eleanor's pretty mouth dimpled into a smile as she kissed her uncle warmly.

"I'll send you an ear trumpet," she declared saucily. "Come and sit by me

on this sofa. Did you get my note this morning?"

"How like a woman!" He dropped down on the comfortable rosewood sofa with a sigh of content. "Of course I received it. Why otherwise should I be here?"

"Then you will take the case?" she asked eagerly.

"I am not a criminal lawyer."

Eleanor's face fell.

"Oh, don't refuse!" she begged earnestly. "Dear Mrs. Winthrop needs some one to watch her interests, and if, later on, occasion requires a criminal lawyer—which, pray Heaven, may not be—you can then engage one for her. She was so relieved when I suggested sending for you."

"In what way does Mrs. Winthrop need my services?"

"Why, to take charge of everything," vaguely. "A man in authority is required here at once."

"Where is Philip?"

"Philip!" Eleanor's tone spoke her contempt. "He is sick in bed, with a trained nurse in attendance." Then she added quickly, answering her uncle's unspoken question: "Too much dissipation has again caused his downfall."

"Um! I don't envy Mrs. Winthrop her precious stepson."

Colonel Thornton's pleasant face hardened, and Eleanor, seeing her advantage, pressed the point.

"Mrs. Winthrop is almost overwhelmed with anxiety and sorrow, which she has to face alone practically. Do, Uncle Dana, if it is possible, take some of this dreadful responsibility off her shoulders."

"I will do what I can," announced the colonel, after a moment's deliberation.

Eleanor clapped her hands.

"Dear Uncle Dana! I knew you would, when you thought it over. Just a moment. I'll send word to Mrs. Winthrop that you are here. She wants to see you."

Joshua was in the hall, and to him Eleanor confided her message for Mrs. Winthrop, then returned to the drawing-room and seated herself on the sofa by her uncle.

"Did you ever know any one in Georgetown named Douglas Hunter?" she inquired.

"Douglas Hunter—Douglas—Why, surely, he must be the young son of John Hunter, who used to be a neighbor of mine in Georgetown. Cousin Kate Truxton can tell you all about the Hunters. She was an intimate friend of John's wife. The Hunters belong to the F. F. V.'s. Why do you ask about Douglas?"

"Joshua told me that he spent last night here, and that he is taking a deep interest in the mystery surrounding Senator Carew's tragic death."

"You must be mistaken," exclaimed Thornton, glancing at her in surprise. "To the best of my recollection, Douglas Hunter entered the consular service very soon after he left college. Then Carew evinced an interest in his career, and had him transferred into the diplomatic service. He's not a detective, child."

"Well, he's acting as if he were one—prying around—"

Eleanor checked her hasty speech, and rose as the portières parted and Mrs. Winthrop advanced into the room. She was a well-known figure in Washington society. Although small of stature, her erect carriage and graceful movements made her seem taller than she really was. She was said to have the longest calling list in Washington, and, although an aristocrat to her finger tips, she had friends and acquaintances in every walk in life, for she possessed the true spirit of democracy which springs from a kind heart and does not ape humility. She had been of inestimable assistance to her brother, Senator Carew, during his political career.

As Colonel Thornton bowed low over her small, blue-veined hand, he noticed the heavy lines and dark shadows that fatigue and sorrow had traced under her eyes, and his hand closed over hers in silent sympathy.

"It is good of you to come, colonel," she began, seating herself in a large armchair next the sofa, "and still kinder to offer to advise me. I feel stunned."

She put her hand to her head with a gesture pathetic in its helplessness, and her sad eyes filled with unbidden tears. Eleanor put out her hand, and it was instantly clasped by the older woman. "Forgive me, colonel." She blinked the tears away, and by a visible effort regained her lost composure. "My brother was very dear to me, and—"

"I know no man who had more friends," replied Thornton gravely, as she paused and bit her trembling lips.

"Exactly. Therefore, his violent death seems monstrous!" declared Mrs. Winthrop. "Who would commit such a deed? My brother's greatest fault was his kind heart—he accomplished so much good unobtrusively. Now, colonel, the first thing I wish to consult you about is offering a reward for the discovery of his murderer. Can you arrange it for me?"

"Certainly. I think it a wise suggestion. How much shall it be?"

Thornton drew out his notebook.

"Five thousand dollars." Then noting Thornton's expression, she asked: "You think it too much?"

"It would perhaps be better to commence with a smaller sum—say one thousand dollars. Then you can increase it, if that amount brings no results."

"That is a capital plan. Well, James, what is it?" to the footman who had entered a second before and approached her chair.

"Mr. Brett wants to know, ma'am, if you will see him an' Mister Hunter for a few minutes. They want to ax yo' a few questions."

Mrs. Winthrop glanced interrogatively at Thornton.

"What shall I do?"

"Perhaps it would be just as well to see them," he replied.

"Very well. James, show the gentlemen in here." As the servant hastened out of the room, she turned to her two guests. "You must be present at this interview, and I depend on you, Colonel Thornton, to check any undue inquisitiveness on the part of the detective."

"I will, madam."

Thornton's grim tone conveyed more than the mere words. He ranked as one of the leaders of the District bar, and few opposing lawyers dared take liberties with him when trying a case.

Eleanor made a motion to rise, but Mrs. Winthrop checked her, with a low-toned, "Wait, dear," as Brett, followed by Douglas Hunter, strode into the room.

Mrs. Winthrop acknowledged Brett's bow with a courteous inclination of her head, but, as he murmured Douglas' name in introducing him, she rose and extended her hand.

"I have frequently heard my brother speak of you, Mr. Hunter," she said, "and have regretted not meeting you before." As Douglas voiced his thanks, she added: "Eleanor, Mr. Hunter."

And Douglas gazed deep into the beautiful eyes that had haunted his memory since their last meeting in Paris. For one second his glance held hers, while a soft blush mantled her cheeks; then Colonel Thornton stepped forward and extended his hand.

"No need of an introduction here, Douglas," he said heartily. "I should have known you anywhere from your likeness to your father, though I haven't seen you since you wore knickerbockers."

"I haven't forgotten 'Thornton's Nest,' nor you, either, colonel," exclaimed Douglas, clasping his hand warmly. "I about lived on your grounds before I went to boarding school."

"Pray be seated, gentlemen." In obedience to Mrs. Winthrop's gesture, Douglas pulled up a chair near hers, while Brett and Colonel Thornton did likewise. "Now, Mr. Brett, what do you wish to ask me?"

"Have you any idea where Senator Carew dined the night of his death?"

"Not the slightest," was the positive reply.

"Was it your brother's custom not to inform you where he was dining?" asked Brett.

"Stop a moment." Thornton held up a protesting hand. "Mrs. Winthrop, you cannot be compelled to answer

questions put to you by Mr. Brett. He has no legal right to examine you now."

"I am quite aware of that, Colonel Thornton," put in Brett composedly. "I am asking these questions that I may gain a little more light on this mystery. I saw Mrs. Winthrop only for a short time yesterday, and, while I do not wish to intrude, I feel that I can accomplish better results by a longer talk. This tragedy must be investigated thoroughly."

"Very true; but you forget, Mr. Brett, that the inquest is the proper place for bringing out testimony. Mrs. Winthrop will have to appear before it, and until that is held, she must not be pestered with questions or harrowed by intrusions."

"I am willing to answer all questions within reason," said Mrs. Winthrop, before the detective could reply. "If you mean, Mr. Brett, that Senator Carew was secretive about his movements, you are mistaken. On the contrary, he was most open and aboveboard in all his dealings with me. Occasionally, when hurried, he did not tell me his plans for the day, but as a general thing I knew all his social engagements."

"Ah, his social engagements," echoed Brett. "How about his official engagements, Mrs. Winthrop?"

"With those I had nothing to do. I never meddled in my brother's political or official career. That was out of my province," was the calm reply.

"Then you think it likely that he dined with some of his official colleagues?"

"I am unable to express an opinion on the subject."

"You had better ask his private secretary what engagements he made for Monday, and with whom he was last seen," broke in Thornton.

"Mr. Philip Winthrop is in no condition to answer questions now. He will be examined before the coroner's inquest when able to leave his room."

"Then I do not see the object of this interview," objected Thornton. "Young Mr. Winthrop is better able to tell you

of Senator Carew's movements that day than Mrs. Winthrop."

"I cannot wait so long." Brett shook his head decidedly. "What clews there are will grow cold, and I cannot afford to risk that. I am deeply interested in clearing up this terrible affair."

"And do you think that I am less so?" demanded Mrs. Winthrop indignantly. "On the contrary, Mr. Brett, I will move heaven and earth to find the perpetrator of that dastardly deed! I have just told Colonel Thornton that I will offer a reward of one thousand dollars for information leading to the criminal's arrest."

"Ah, then you do *not* think the negro coachman, Hamilton, guilty?" put in Brett quickly.

"I have not said so." But Mrs. Winthrop looked disconcerted for a second, then regained her usual serenity. "My idea in offering the reward was to assist your investigation, and Colonel Thornton agreed with me that it was an excellent plan."

"Mrs. Winthrop"—the detective spoke with greater distinctness—"was Senator Carew on good terms with all the members of his family?"

"He was, sir, with members of this household." Mrs. Winthrop hesitated briefly, then continued: "I think that I had better tell you that, after his return from Panama, a short time ago, my brother received a number of threatening letters."

"Indeed!" Brett's tone betrayed his satisfaction. "May I see the letters?"

"Unfortunately my brother destroyed the one that he showed me."

"What were its contents?" inquired Brett.

"To the best of my recollection, the message, which was written in an obviously disguised writing, read somewhat like this: 'Your movements are watched. If you act, you die.'"

"Did you see the envelope?" asked Brett, as he jotted down the words in his memorandum book.

"No. At the time my brother showed it to me, he told me that he had received several others; that he had no idea to what they referred; and that he

never paid attention to anonymous communications."

"I see." Brett thoughtfully replaced his notebook in his pocket. "May I talk to your niece, Miss Cynthia Carew?"

Mrs. Winthrop shook her head.

"She is still too prostrated to be interviewed."

"Poor little soul! It was a ghastly experience for her!" ejaculated Colonel Thornton.

"It was, indeed," agreed Mrs. Winthrop. "She was devoted to her uncle, and he to her. Consequently, the shock has driven her half out of her mind."

"Miss Thornton"—Brett turned and faced Eleanor—"do you know to whom Miss Carew referred when she exclaimed, on greeting you yesterday afternoon: 'They quarreled, Eleanor; they quarreled!'"

Mrs. Winthrop caught her breath sharply.

"Why her words referred to Hamilton, the coachman," replied Eleanor quietly, and her eyes did not waver before Brett's stern glance.

The detective broke the short silence that followed.

"I won't detain you longer, Mrs. Winthrop. I am exceedingly obliged to you for the information that you have furnished. Mr. Hunter, are you coming downtown?"

Douglas nodded an affirmative as he rose. Mrs. Winthrop and Colonel Thornton detained Brett with a question as he was leaving the room. Douglas seized his opportunity and crossed over to Eleanor's side.

"How have you been since I saw you last, Miss Thornton?" he inquired.

"Very well, thanks. And you?" Eleanor inspected him with good-natured raillery. "You look—as serious as ever."

Douglas reddened.

"It has been my lot in life to have to take things seriously. I'm not such a Puritan as you evidently think me."

"Come and see me, and perhaps, on better acquaintance——" She paused. "What?"

"You will improve."



Eleanor's eyes hardened, and she turned abruptly away, without seeing his half-extended hand. 843

Her charming, roguish smile robbed the words of their sting.

"You think, then, that I am an acquired taste?"

"I have not seen enough of you to know."

"When may I call on you?"

She parried the question with another.

"Why did you leave Paris without saying good-by to me?"

The simple question sobered Douglas. It brought back an unpleasant recollection, best forgotten. Eleanor's bewitching personality had exerted an extraordinary influence over him. He had found himself watching her every movement, instinct with grace, and eagerly waiting to catch her smile. In Paris, he had often cursed himself for a fool, even when attending a reception just to catch a glimpse of her. She was a born coquette, and could no more help enjoying an innocent flirtation than a kitten could help frolicking. It had been her intense femininity that had first attracted him. Frightened at the influence that she had unconsciously exerted over him, he had deliberately avoided her—and fate had thrown them together again! It was kismet! Why not enjoy the goods that the gods provided and be thankful?

"Time and tide wait for no man," he quoted. "I had to catch a steamer at a moment's notice. Hence the 'P. P. C.' card. Please show your forgiveness, and let me call."

"And if I don't?"

"Why, I'll come, anyway."

Eleanor's eyes twinkled.

"Bravo! I like the spirit of young Lochinvar."

"He came out of the West, whereas I come out of the East."

"Oh, well, extremes meet."

"Then don't be surprised if I carry you off."

The words were spoken in jest, but the look in Douglas' eyes caused Eleanor to blush hotly.

"Marse Brett am a-waitin' fo' yo', suh," said Joshua, from the doorway, breaking in on the tête-à-tête.

"Oh, ah, yes." Douglas was sud-

denly conscious of the absence of the others. "Miss Thornton, I had no idea that I was detaining you. Please say good-by to Mrs. Winthrop and your uncle. I never realized in Paris that you belonged to the Thorntons, of Georgetown."

"You never took the trouble to make inquiries about me?" She surprised a look in Douglas' face—why did he appear as if caught? The expression was fleeting, but Eleanor's eyes hardened. "Good-by!"

She turned abruptly away, without seeing his half-extended hand.

Douglas looked anything but pleasant when he joined Brett, who stood waiting for him in the vestibule. They strolled down Massachusetts Avenue for over a block in absolute silence.

Brett was the first to speak.

"While you were eating breakfast, I saw Annette, Miss Thornton's French maid, and questioned her in regard to the dressing gowns worn by the Carew household."

"What luck did you have?" inquired Douglas, rousing from a deep study.

"She says that Mrs. Winthrop, Miss Carew, and Miss Thornton all wear dressing gowns made of Oriental silk."

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Douglas, much astonished. "Still, they can't all be of the same pattern."

"It won't be so easy to identify your midnight caller by means of that silk," taking out the slip that Douglas had torn from the dressing gown the night before. "Annette says that the gowns were given to Mrs. Winthrop and Miss Carew by Miss Thornton, who purchased them, with hers, at a Japanese store in H Street. The French girl isn't above accepting a bribe, so when I suggested her showing me the gowns, she got them and brought them into the library, while Mrs. Winthrop and Miss Thornton were breakfasting in Miss Carew's boudoir."

"Did you see all three of them?"

"Yes, and they are as alike as peas in a pod. And, Mr. Hunter"—his voice deepened impressively—"I examined them with the greatest care, and not one

kimono was torn—nor had any one of them ever been mended.”

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

“This gentleman has called to see you, sir.”

The messenger handed a visiting card to the secretary of state, who laid his pen down on his desk and carefully inspected the card.

“Show Mr. Hunter in,” he directed, then looked across at his stenographer. “You need not wait, Jones.”

As the stenographer gathered up his papers and hastened out of the room, Douglas was ushered in, and after a few words of greeting, the secretary motioned him to take the large leather chair placed beside his desk.

“I was sorry not to find you when I called yesterday, Mr. Secretary,” began Douglas.

“I was detained in the West, and did not get here until this morning. What do you wish to see me about, Mr. Hunter?”

“First, to thank you for granting me a leave of absence.”

“That is all right. Senator Carew came here and asked, as a particular favor to him, that you be allowed to return to Washington. By the way, his death was terrible, terrible! His loss will be felt by the whole country.”

“It will, indeed,” agreed Douglas.

“Did you see Senator Carew before his death?”

“No, Mr. Secretary; I only reached Washington on Monday, the night of his murder.”

“It seems an outrage, in these days of our boasted civilization, that a man of such brilliant attainments, a man whose life was of benefit to his country, should be killed wantonly by a worthless, drunken negro!” exclaimed the secretary, with much feeling.

“You believe, then, that Senator Carew was murdered by his servant?”

“I gathered that impression from the newspapers, and they all insist that the negro is guilty. Do you think otherwise?”

“I do.”

“And your reasons?”

“The use of the letter file, an extraordinary weapon for a negro coachman to use.”

“Is that your only reason for believing the negro innocent?” The secretary’s piercing eyes studied Douglas’ face intently.

“No, sir.”

“Is there anything that strikes you as being of vital importance in the case that has not yet been brought out?”

“Senator Carew was chairman of the foreign relations committee.”

The secretary stared at Douglas for a full minute without speaking.

“I don’t quite catch your meaning, Mr. Hunter,” he said finally.

“Let me explain, Mr. Secretary,” began Douglas earnestly. “Some time ago, I received a letter from Senator Carew *suggesting* that I apply for leave of absence.”

“Why?” snapped out the secretary.

“He did not specify directly,” returned Douglas calmly. “He said that he wished to consult me about my future. One moment——” as the secretary opened his lips to speak. “At the end of the letter, the senator added that he hoped I was making the most of my opportunities; that it was only the part of wisdom to inform myself of all that was going on in Japan; and that he expected that I would be able to give him some interesting data about the ‘Yankees of the East,’ as he had always been curious as regards their customs, past history, and future plans.”

The secretary settled back in his chair and fumbled with his watch chain. He was the first to break the silence.

“Did you follow Senator Carew’s advice?”

“I did, sir.”

“With what results?”

“Among other things, I discovered that there was an unusual activity commencing in the shipyards; that army maneuvers were being conducted unostentatiously; and finally, the day I sailed, I heard a report that three transports were being fitted out at Waka-

yama, a closed port, and were to sail shortly under sealed orders."

"Excellent! Have you any idea of the transports' destination?"

"No, sir."

"Why did you not send me this information before?"

The secretary spoke with unwonted sternness.

"I did cable a cipher dispatch to Senator Carew. I thought that he would mention it to you; that possibly you had requested him to get certain information, and did not care to have it sent through the department directly."

"The senator did not take me into his confidence in the matter."

"That's very strange!" muttered Douglas. "Very strange! Detective Brett, who is investigating the Carew case, declares, from writing found on a blotter, that the senator wrote a letter to some unknown person. On one side of the blotter were clearly traced the words: 'Am writing in case I don't see you before——' and on the other: 'I have discovered——' Brett thinks that Senator Carew was interrupted on two occasions while writing the letter, and laid the blotter on the fresh ink to prevent the person who entered from seeing what he had written."

The secretary followed Douglas' story with the greatest attention.

"A likely hypothesis," he acknowledged, slowly settling back in his revolving chair, for he had been leaning forward on his desk the better to catch every word spoken by Douglas in his quiet monotone. "To whom do you think that letter was written?"

"To you, undoubtedly, Mr. Secretary. Possibly my information may have given him the clew that he needed to verify certain suspicions. You were in the West, he wanted to get the news to you without further delay, and the only thing that he could do was to write or wire."

"Or telephone," supplemented the secretary; then, as Douglas' face brightened, he added: "Unfortunately for your theory, Senator Carew did none of those things."

"You mean?"

"That I have never received a letter, a telegram, or a telephone message from him while I was away."

"He may still have written a message and have been killed before he could get it off to you."

"Has such a letter been found by Brett?"

"No, sir; nor any trace of it. So far, he has been unable to find out whether such a letter was seen or posted by any member of the senator's household. All he has to go on is the blotter."

"Why did you not go at once to see Senator Carew when you arrived in Washington?"

"Because my cousin, Captain Taylor, who met me at the Union station, gave me a note from Senator Carew asking me to call on him at nine o'clock Tuesday morning at his residence."

"How did the senator know where a note would reach you?"

"He inclosed it in a note to my cousin asking him to see that it was delivered to me at once on my arrival."

"Has it occurred to you that Senator Carew's missing letter, which Brett is so anxious to find, may have been addressed to you?"

"I never thought of that!" exclaimed Douglas. "I was so thoroughly convinced that he had tried to communicate with you."

"I would inquire about your mail, if I were you, Mr. Hunter."

"I will do so at once."

Douglas half rose.

"No, no, sit down." The secretary waited until Douglas had resumed his seat. "Where are you stopping?"

"At the Albany."

"You have brought me very serious news, Mr. Hunter. So serious that I must insist on some verification of your statements about Japan before you leave me."

Douglas took from a cleverly concealed pocket in the lining of his coat a number of sheets of rice paper and handed them to the secretary, who studied the closely written papers long and intently. Suddenly he pulled open

a desk drawer and took out his strong box.

"I will keep these papers, Mr. Hunter, for future reference," he announced, unlocking the box and placing the rice papers in it. Then, with equal care, he replaced the box in the drawer, which he locked securely. "We must go slowly in this matter. A slip on our part, and two great nations may become involved in a needless and bloody war."

"I realize the gravity of the situation, Mr. Secretary, and have come to you for advice in the matter."

"Good! I depend on you not to mention our conversation to any one, nor do I think it wise to acquaint Brett at this time with your suspicions in regard to the motive for Senator Carew's murder. With all good intentions, Brett might blunder, and cause international complications."

Douglas stroked his clean-shaven chin reflectively.

"Don't you think, Mr. Secretary, that there is danger of being too secretive, and that the guilty party may slip through our fingers?"

"It is a risk that we will have to take. Frankly, I think you and Brett are equal to the situation." The secretary glanced at his watch. "Have you any engagement just now, Mr. Hunter?"

"No, sir. My time is at your disposal."

The secretary reached up and touched the electric buzzer hanging above his desk, and in a few seconds his stenographer appeared from another room.

"Jones, call up Secretary Wyndham and ask if he can see me." As the clerk disappeared to execute his order, he turned back to Douglas. "There are certain charts of the Pacific that I wish you to see; they have been made recently. Well, Jones?" as the clerk reentered his office.

"Secretary Wyndham is expecting you, sir."

"Thanks. Now, Mr. Hunter, get your hat, and we will go to the navy department."

CHAPTER IX.

THE THEFT.

The secretary of state and Douglas hastened through the wide corridors of the immense State, War, and Navy Building. As they passed an elevator shaft in the navy wing, Douglas caught a fleeting glimpse of Eleanor Thornton in one of the lifts as it shot downward toward the ground floor. On their arrival, they were ushered at once into Secretary Wyndham's private office.

"Glad to see you!" exclaimed Wyndham. "Your call is most opportune."

He stopped on seeing Douglas standing behind the secretary of state, and his eyebrows went up questioningly.

"This is Mr. Douglas Hunter, attaché of the American embassy at Tokyo, Wyndham," explained the secretary of state.

"How are you, sir." The secretary of the navy shook hands brusquely.

"Will you both be seated?"

"I brought Mr. Hunter with me that he might tell you of certain information that he gathered in Japan about some prospective movements of their navy."

He glanced significantly at Douglas, who nodded understandingly, and without more words gave a clear, concise statement of naval affairs in Japan, omitting all mention of other matters.

Secretary Wyndham listened to his remarks with the closest attention. When he ceased speaking, Wyndham sprang from his chair and, walking over to the adjoining room, spoke to his confidential clerk, then closed the door and returned.

"I have told him to admit no one," he explained briefly, as he seated himself in his swivel chair.

"Can we see the new charts of the Pacific?" inquired the secretary of state.

"Certainly; but first I must tell you of a remarkable occurrence that took place here earlier this morning." A violent fit of coughing interrupted Wyndham, and it was some minutes before he could speak clearly. "Ah!" he gasped, tilting back in his chair and



mopping his flushed face. "A spring cold is almost impossible to cure."

"I don't think yours will be improved if you continue to sit in a direct draft," remonstrated the secretary of state, pointing to the open windows.

"I had to have air. By George, man, if you had been through what I have this morning——"

He did not complete his sentence.

"What happened?" asked the secretary of state, with growing interest.

"The plans of the two new dreadnaughts have been stolen."

"Impossible!" The secretary of state half started from his chair.

"Impossible? Well, I'd have said the same five hours ago," dryly.

"Were they stolen from this office?" asked Douglas.

"Yes; and not only from this office, but under my very eyes."

"How?"

"To give you both a clear idea, I must go into details." Wyndham drew his chair up closer and lowered his voice. "About twelve o'clock, my private secretary brought me word that a man wished to see me personally. Of course, I have daily callers, all of whom wish to see me personally, and usually my secretary takes care of them. This particular caller refused to give his name, and said that he would explain his business to me alone. I thought that he was simply a harmless crank, and told my secretary to get rid of him as soon as possible." Wyndham sighed. "In a few minutes my secretary was back in the office, saying that the stranger had a message for me from Senator Carew."

"A written message?" asked the secretary of state.

"No, a verbal one. With every one else in Washington, I have taken great interest in the terrible murder of my old friend. The man's statement aroused my interest, and, having a few minutes of leisure, I told my secretary to show him in."

"What did he look like?"

"A tall, dark chap. His hair and beard were black, and he had the bluest

eyes that I've ever seen in human head."

"Was he well dressed?"

"No; his clothes were shabby, but fairly neat. He looked as if he had spruced up for the occasion. I can't say that I was prepossessed in his favor by his appearance."

"Did he give you his name?"

"No."

"Do you think he was an American?" put in Douglas.

"It's hard to say. At first I sized him up as a Spaniard."

"Didn't you ask his name?" again inquired the secretary of state impatiently.

"I did, and his errand. He ignored my first question, and in answer to the second, said that he had come to examine some records. I informed him that he had come to the wrong office, and that my clerk would direct him to the proper room. He then made the astounding statement that he had an appointment to meet Senator Carew here in this office at twelve o'clock. I was taken completely by surprise by the man's statement, and asked: 'What day did you expect to meet Senator Carew here?'

"'This morning, at twelve o'clock,' he answered, and then added: 'He is late.'"

"Thinking the man a little daft, or drunk, though I could detect no sign of liquor, I said abruptly: 'A likely tale! Senator Carew is dead.'"

"'Dead!' he shouted, springing out of his chair."

"'Yes, dead—murdered last Monday night.'"

"I hadn't anticipated giving him such a shock, or I would have broken the news more gently. The effect on my visitor was appalling. He collapsed on the floor in a fit. The electric bells in this office are out of order, and, although I shouted for help, no one heard me. I sprang out of my chair, undid the man's necktie and collar, threw the contents of my ice-water pitcher in his face, and then bolted into the other room to get assistance. Most of the clerks had gone out to their lunch. I

called two men who happened to be eating their lunch in an adjoining room, and we hastened back here, only to find my strange visitor gone!"

"Gone!" ejaculated the secretary of state.

"Vanished. The only sign of his presence was the spilled ice water on the floor, and that chair overturned," pointing to the one that Douglas was occupying.

"Did no one see him slip out of the door into the hall?" asked Douglas.

"No. Unfortunately, the messenger, who sits near my door, had gone into the room across the corridor. The man made a quick get-away, and luck broke with him, for no one noticed him leaving the building."

"How do you know that he isn't hiding somewhere?" inquired Douglas.

"If he is, he will be captured, for Chief Connor and a number of secret-service men are searching the building."

"When did you discover that the plans of the battleships were missing?"

Wyndham swore softly.

"That's the devilish part of it!" he said bitterly. "As soon as I realized that the man had really run away, I glanced over my papers. Everything seemed to be all right. I pulled open this drawer," opening it as he spoke, "and saw these blue prints lying exactly as I had placed them under this folded newspaper. I slammed the drawer shut, thinking that my strange visitor was simply a harmless lunatic, who had probably read about Carew's death until he had become obsessed with the subject, and dismissed the matter from my mind."

"Was this drawer locked when your strange visitor was admitted?"

"No."

"Then any one might have stolen the papers!" exclaimed the secretary of state, in surprise.

Wyndham reddened.

"No, they could not. The only time I've been out of this room was when I ran out looking for aid for that miserable scoundrel. That is the only chance there has been to steal the papers."

"You think, then," began Douglas, checking his remarks off on his fingers, "first, that the whole thing was a plot; that the man used Senator Carew's name to arouse your interest or curiosity; that he faked a fit, and in your absence removed the plans and substituted false blue prints, taking a chance that you would simply look to see that everything was safe in your drawer, and not examine further, and then made his escape."

"You've hit it exactly," acknowledged Wyndham. "Those were the conclusions reached by Chief Connor, also."

"It was no irresponsible person who committed that theft," declared the secretary of state thoughtfully. "It was a well-laid plan, neatly carried out. How long have the papers been in your possession, Wyndham?"

"They were sent here yesterday for my inspection. There has been a leak here somewhere, damn it!" Wyndham set his bulldog jaw. "I'll trace it to the bottom, and when I find out—"

He clenched his fists menacingly.

"What callers did you see beside the Spaniard?" asked Douglas.

"Let me see—the usual run—several office seekers, a number of naval officers— Oh, yes, my wife came in with Colonel Thornton and his niece, Miss Eleanor Thornton."

"Before or after the Spaniard had been here?" questioned Douglas swiftly.

"Shortly afterward. They came in about a quarter of one, and did not stay long."

"After you had discovered the loss of the plans?"

"No, before. I discovered their loss only three-quarters of an hour ago."

"How long were your wife and her friends in this office?" inquired Douglas persistently.

"About fifteen minutes."

"Then how does it happen that I saw Miss Eleanor Thornton descending in one of the elevators when the secretary and I were on our way to this office to see you?"

"Oh, Miss Eleanor told me that she was going to the library to look up the records of some of her ancestors, as

she wishes to join the Colonial Dames. I think she has been up there ever since. My wife and Colonel Thornton left together without waiting for her."

"You are absolutely certain, Wyndham, that you haven't been out of this office except on that one occasion?" asked the secretary of state for the second time.

"I will take my Bible oath on it!" exclaimed Wyndham solemnly.

The three men gazed at one another in silence, each busy with his own thoughts. The secretary of state was the first to recover himself.

"Have you had your lunch, Wyndham?" he inquired.

The latter shook his head.

"I've lost my appetite," he growled.

The secretary of state rose and placed his hand on the broad shoulder of the younger man.

"Don't take it so much to heart, Wyndham," he said kindly. "We'll get at the bottom of this tangle before long. We'll all stand by and help you, and, remember, Chief Connor is a host in himself."

"Thanks." Wyndham straightened his bent shoulders; his face was set and his eyes snapped as the spirit of the born fighter returned. "I'll move heaven and earth until I catch that Spaniard. Must you both be going?"

"Yes." The secretary of state answered for Douglas as well as for himself. "We have detained you quite long enough. Let me know immediately of any new developments."

"I will. Mr. Hunter, it's been a pleasure to meet you, although I am afraid the information you have given me, considered with the loss of the plans of the new battleships, complicates the situation. Good-by; come and see me again." And the big door swung shut.

Halfway down the corridor, the secretary of state paused and regarded Douglas seriously.

"Talk of complicated situations!" He passed his hand wearily over his forehead, then started with sudden resolution. "Come on, Hunter, I'm going over to the White House. A talk with the president may clear my brain.

Wyndham may have lost his appetite, but he's given us food for thought."

CHAPTER X.

OVER THE TEACUPS.

Cynthia turned a flushed and tear-stained face toward Eleanor as the latter entered the boudoir and approached her couch.

"Is it all over?" she asked, choking back a sob.

"Yes." Eleanor lifted her black crape veil, and, pulling out the hatpins, removed her hat and handed it to Annette, who had followed her into the room. "Take my coat, too, Annette," she directed. "Then you need not wait." As the servant left the room, she pulled a low rocking-chair up to the couch on which Cynthia was lying, and placed her hand gently on the weeping girl's shoulder. "Are you feeling better, dear?"

"A little better." Cynthia wiped her eyes with a dry handkerchief that Annette had placed on her couch some moments before. "Oh, Eleanor, I am so bitterly ashamed of the scene I made downstairs!"

"You need not be." Eleanor stroked the curly, fair hair back from Cynthia's hot forehead with loving fingers. "It was a very painful scene, and Doctor Wallace's tribute to Senator Carew, while beautiful, was harrowing. I am not surprised that you fainted, dear."

"Aunt Charlotte didn't, and she was so devoted to Uncle James."

"Mrs. Winthrop had not been through your terrible experience of Monday night. Consequently she had the strength to bear to-day's ordeal."

"Was it very dreadful at the cemetery?"

"No, dear. The services at the grave were very simple, and as the funeral was private, it attracted no morbid spectators."

"Did any one accompany you?"

"Just a handful of people, who were here for the house services."

"Where is Aunt Charlotte?"

"She went to her room to lie down."

Cynthia raised herself on her elbow and glanced searchingly about the pretty sitting room, with its bird's-eye-maple furniture. The yellow wall paper, with its wide border of pink roses, the chintz curtains, and the hangings to match, cast a soft, yellow glow that was exceedingly becoming, as well as restful to the eye. The afternoon sunshine came through the long French windows which overlooked a broad alley.

"Eleanor, would you mind closing the door of my bedroom?" she asked. "And please first see that—that *Blanche* isn't sitting there, sewing."

Eleanor glanced curiously at Cynthia as she rose, crossed to the adjoining bedroom, and softly closed the door.

"There is no one in your room," she reported, on her return to her rocking-chair.

Cynthia settled back among her pillows with an air of satisfaction.

"At last I have you to myself. First the trained nurse, whom I didn't need, and then Aunt Charlotte, have always been hanging around, and I haven't had a chance to ask you any questions."

"What is it you wish to know?"

"Was there—was there—an autopsy?" Noting Eleanor's expression, she exclaimed hastily. "Now, Eleanor, dear, *don't* say that I mustn't talk of Uncle James' death. The nurse wouldn't answer me when I spoke on the subject; said that I must not think of the tragedy, that it was bad for me. Such nonsense! I would have asked Aunt Charlotte, but she's been so queer lately, not in the least like her own dear self."

"Mrs. Winthrop is living under such great strain these days, Cynthia, it's not surprising. Her brother dead—Philip very ill—"

"They told me he was better," hastily jerked out Cynthia, with a startled look in her big brown eyes.

"He is, now." Eleanor hesitated. "The doctor at first thought that he might develop brain fever, but I am told that all danger of that is past."

"What is the matter with him?" persisted Cynthia. "I asked the nurse what the trouble was, but she never told

me. Was his attack also caused by the shock of Uncle James' death?"

"Yes, from shock," answered Eleanor mechanically. "You mustn't blame your aunt if her manner is distraught. She is a very reserved woman, and dreads, above all things, letting herself go and breaking down."

"Oh, I hope she will keep well! She has been so unhappy. I can't bear to think of her suffering more, but"—she laid her hand pleadingly on Eleanor's arm—"you haven't answered my question about the autopsy."

"Yes, they held one."

"And what was discovered?" eagerly.

"That Senator Carew was perfectly well physically, and that his death was caused by a stab from the sharp-pointed letter file."

Cynthia suddenly covered her eyes with her hand, and lay for some minutes without speaking.

"Is Hamilton still in jail?" she questioned finally.

"Yes; he is being held for the inquest."

"Inquest?" Cynthia glanced up, startled. "I thought the inquest was over?"

"No, it hasn't been held yet."

"But Uncle James was buried today."

"The funeral could not be postponed, Cynthia. The doctors who performed the autopsy will testify at the inquest."

"But I thought that it was always necessary to hold the inquest after a violent death."

"It is, usually; but in this case the inquest was postponed because you and Philip, two of the most important witnesses, were too ill to attend it."

Cynthia closed and unclosed her tapering fingers over her handkerchief spasmodically.

"Are the detectives still hanging around the house?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"It's shameful!" announced Cynthia, sitting upright. "To allow those men to intrude on our grief and privacy! They have arrested Hamilton for the crime, and should leave us alone."

"They do not think Hamilton guilty."

"Whom—whom—do they suspect?" The question seemed forced from her.

"Mr. Brett hasn't confided in me."

"Mr. Brett?"

"He's the detective in charge of the case."

"Oh, is he the tall, fine-looking man whom I saw talking to Joshua in the hall yesterday morning?"

"No, that was probably Douglas Hunter."

"Douglas Hunter? Not the Douglas Hunter of the diplomatic corps, whom Uncle James was forever talking about?"

"The same. Do you know him?"

"No; he has always been absent from Washington when I've been in the city. What is he doing here now?"

"Trying to help Mr. Brett solve the mystery of Senator Carew's death."

"Good heavens! What earthly business is it of his?"

"Don't ask me." Eleanor's usually tranquil voice was a trifle sharp. "I suppose he is hoping to win the reward offered by Mrs. Winthrop."

"Reward?"

Cynthia's voice rose and drowned the sound of a faint knock at the hall door.

"Yes. Your aunt announced that she would give five thousand dollars to any one who could solve the mystery." Cynthia was listening with absorbed attention to Eleanor, and neither noticed that the hall door was pushed open a few inches, then softly closed. "Uncle Dana told her that that was too much to offer, and she reduced the sum to one thousand dollars, with the proviso that it should be increased if the first offer brought no result."

Cynthia sighed deeply.

"Why—why did she do it?" she cried passionately. "She must be mad!"

Eleanor glanced at her companion in astonishment.

"Cynthia, you must not excite yourself," she remonstrated firmly. "Otherwise I shall leave you."

Cynthia reached out and clutched her arm.

"Don't go," she entreated. "I must ——" Her words were interrupted by

a sharp rap on the hall door. "Come in!"

In response, Annette opened the door.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, but it is five o'clock, and I thought you might like your tea."

"Capital, Annette!" exclaimed Eleanor, as the maid entered carrying a tray. "Wait a moment, and I will get that small table."

Deftly she removed the books and magazines, and then carried the table over to the couch. Annette put a tray laden with tempting sandwiches, small cakes, the teapot, and its accessories, on the table, then bent over and arranged Cynthia's pillows at her back with a practiced hand.

"Mademoiselle is more comfortable, *n'est-ce pas?*" she asked briskly.

"Yes, indeed, Annette." Cynthia nodded gratefully at the Frenchwoman.

"Have you everything you wish, Mademoiselle Eleanor?"

"Yes, Annette, thank you. If I want anything more I will ring."

"Be sure and close the door, Annette," directed Cynthia. "I am afraid of a draft."

And she looked around until she saw her order obeyed.

"Have a sandwich?" asked Eleanor, handing the dish and a plate to Cynthia.

"I'd rather eat good sandwiches than solid food," announced Cynthia, after a pause, helping herself to another portion.

"Solid?" echoed Eleanor. "I call pâté de foie gras and deviled ham pretty solid eating, Cynthia; especially when taken in bulk," glancing quizzically at the rapidly diminishing pile.

"Don't begrudge me these crumbs." Cynthia's smile was followed by a sigh.

"I've lived on slops for three days. Why are you giving me such weak tea, Eleanor? I loathe it made that way."

"I am afraid to make it stronger, Cynthia; it will keep you awake."

"I don't want to sleep; I'd give anything *not* to sleep!"

"Why, Cynthia?"

"If I could really sleep—drop into

oblivion—I would like it, but, instead, I dream, and, oh, God, I fear my dream!"

Eleanor laid a restraining hand on her shoulder.

"Lie down," she commanded, "and compose yourself."

Cynthia lay back on her pillows, panting a little from her exertion, the color coming and going in her winsome face.

"I would give anything, Eleanor, if I had your tranquil disposition," she said, more quietly. "I cannot help my temperament. My mother was Scotch to the finger tips, and, I have been told, had the gift of second-sight—although I sometimes doubt if such a thing is a gift."

"Perhaps I can understand better than you think," said Eleanor gently. "My mother was Irish, and the Irish, you know, are just as great believers in the supernatural as the Scotch."

"You always understand." Cynthia bent forward and kissed her friend warmly. "That's why you are such a comfort. Let me tell you why I am so nervous and unstrung. Since a little child, I have been obsessed by one dream. It is always the same, and always precedes disaster." She sighed drearily. "I had it just before my grandmother's death, then before my

uncle, Mr. Winthrop, killed himself—and on Sunday night I had it again."

"What is your dream?"

"It is this way: I may be sleeping soundly, when suddenly I see a door—a door that stands out vividly in a shadowy space, which might be a room, or hallway. The door is white and the panels are in the shape of a cross—so," illustrating her meaning with her arms. "I hear a cry—the cry of a soul in torment—I rush to the rescue, always to find the door locked, and I wake myself beating on the empty air." She shuddered as she spoke, and drew her kimono closer about her. "I awake cold, and trembling from head to foot."

"You poor darling!"

Eleanor took the limp form in her arms with a gesture of infinite understanding and compassion.

"I had the dream Sunday night," sobbed Cynthia. "Then Monday, when I thought that we could announce our engagement—"

"Whose engagement?" asked a quiet voice behind the pair.

Startled, Eleanor wheeled around, to find Mrs. Winthrop standing behind her, while Cynthia slipped from her arms and buried her head in the friendly cushions, her slender form shaking with convulsive sobs.

The mystery surrounding the death of Senator Carew becomes more intense, and several new clews are discovered in the installment of "The Man Inside" which will appear in the March number, on the news stands February 5th.



Illumination

DULL, bleak the wide and silent plain
 With winter snows,
 Until the sunset's ruddy torch
 Turns white to rose.

A well-loved step draws softly near—
 A whispered name!
 Unlighted eyes flood swift with joy,
 And leap to flame!

STELLA E. SAXTON.



Capitalizing a Bad Habit

By Hildegarde Lavender

Author of "Chaperons or Knowledge," "The Best-Dressed Woman," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

ACCORDING to Shakespeare, or some other almost equal authority, our pleasant vices become in time scourges to flay us. But that is not the universal experience, in the view of Miss Flora Blank, late petted darling and easy-going spendthrift, now brisk business woman. She is advancing a theory as to the commercial value of bad habits, when put to work.

"The trouble with the bad habit," she announced earnestly and almost convincingly to a group of her friends, "is that people are ashamed of it, and try to keep it out of sight and out of mind, instead of sitting down, facing it calmly, calculatingly, and considering how to make it valuable. You needn't tell me anything to the contrary—I believe that there is more lost to the country through the lack of development of bad habits than through the lack of development of the natural-gas supply, or the abuse of the forests! I am sure of it, because I've just put my worst habit to work, and it is making a very pretty income for me, thank you."

Some one objected to Flora's general thesis, and pointed out that bad habits are industrially considered, and commercially employed, by a large part of the world already—that the liquor interests are a well-organized and energetic set of interests; that the illegal use of opium goes on in the most businesslike manner; and that other

vicious habits have been capitalized, so to speak, for the benefit of gentlemen holding her views on the monetary possibilities in evil.

"You don't grasp my meaning," declared the exponent of a new industrial philosophy. "I have no doubt that the liquor sellers make other people's bad habits work for them, and so likewise do the drug concerns. But what I mean is for a victim of the bad habit to put his bad habit to work for him—not for the benefit of the liquor dealers, or the smugglers of opium, or whatever it may be. De Quincy," she went on dreamily, "adopted my idea when he wrote 'The Confessions of an Opium Eater.' Having acquired the bad habit of eating opium, he proceeded to get something for himself out of it—not merely something for the sellers of the poppy juice. And, to come nearer home—there's my Cousin Belle's husband, whose bad habit it is to lie abed, in the summer when Belle is not there to nag him into activity, until the last possible minute in the morning—and then a little longer. He has made his bad habit of commercial use to him. He bestirred his mind for a device that should set the water for his bath a-heating, boil his morning egg, and so on, without effort on his part.

"He perfected it—a wonderful electrical arrangement, whereby an alarm clock goes off, waking him just enough



"And she interrupted me to snap: 'Well, for pity's sake, go and get it for me!'"

to cause him to turn over and nestle deeper into the luxury of his last nap, while at the same time it turns a little button or presses a little bell or something—I'm no electrician, so I can't tell you what—and releases a current of electricity to heat the bathroom boiler.

"It goes off again automatically by and by, and Belle's husband rises to a tub of water at the temperature he likes, while at the same instant the water on the electric stove in the kitchenette begins to heat for an egg. It was a wonderful contrivance, which

he thought out solely because he was too lazy to do things in the routine way when she, and the baby, and the maid were in the country. And he has patented it, and a concern has put it on the market—and they have a new car, all because Belle's husband was so intelligently lazy!

"I've always suspected," she added meditatively, "that Newton was lying under a tree in the most disgraceful state of indolence when the renowned apple of gravitation fell and established his reputation forever! And that young

Mr. James Watts was indulging himself in a reprehensible fondness for drowsy fireside peace and heat when the steam from his granny's kettle set him off to be the father or the great-great-grandfather of the last new ocean liner built! All these gentlemen were like me—they all knew how to make capital out of their bad habits.

"Some day a man—or maybe a woman—with a taste for drink, will be born who will think over his favorite bad habit until he devises a beverage with all the delicious taste of wine, and the exhilaration of alcohol, and all the harmlessness of Sunday-school-picnic lemonade. And he—or she—will make an everlasting fortune, and be a savior of the race as well! And you all know about the man whose bad habit was cigarette smoking—to excess—and not only to excess, but to extravagance, for there wasn't a cigarette on the market, or a tobacco on the market that could satisfy his fastidious taste. So he blended tobaccos and had a special maker make his horrid little coffin nails, as they were called in my school days. And when he died of nicotine poisoning, or smoker's heart, or whatever it was, his widow promptly capitalized his bad habit, and manufactured those cigarettes for filthy lucre. And she's made a fortune!"

"But about your own bad habit?" the audience suggested.

"I almost hate to speak of it, for fear it should seem like begging your kind attention to my particular line of goods," laughed Flora. "But you all know that I am an extravagant thing, and rather brainless."

There were polite disclaimers, of course.

"Oh, yes, I am," declared Flora airily. "I always have been. I always have been the one girl who did nothing in a circle of girls who fairly made one dizzy with the things that they were doing! Of course, the excuse for me was that my people had loads of money, and that I had been badly educated, so that I cared more for the froth of existence than the solid substance. Well, that was true enough in a way, but the

truer truth was that I was rather brainless. I wasn't so brainless that I didn't admire brains in other people—as witness my friends!" She included the group in a broad wave of her hand, whereas the group bowed its appreciative head. "I always loved the people who were doing things—and they have forbearingly tolerated me!"

"Modest Flora!" exclaimed the spokesman for the obliged group. "But get on with your story."

"All this is my story. For it is all preliminary to what I have done in the way of harnessing a fly-away bad habit to the plow and harvesting a nice little crop thereby! All my friends were interested in serious things, and were doing serious things. Maude was doing hand-hammered silver that was most beautiful, and she was wearing clothes that looked like fury because she never took the time to consider them, or the time to buy them properly. Mary was running a settlement and looking like destruction. Adele was keeping a school, and her house was hideous. And so on and so on.

"And here was spendthrift Flora, who loved to shop and to spend money, who would really rather attend a special sale than an Ibsen matinée—though they are often very funny—and who would rather browse through an antique shop than uplift the poor, or purify politics, or do any of those things that were the breath of life to her friends! Here was Flora, who always knew where real val could be bought a half cent a yard cheaper than anywhere else, just because that was the kind of information she liked, though she was woefully ignorant of the names of the rival candidates for mayor. Here was Flora, who knew by heart who were the best menders of china in town, because she liked to carry the broken pieces of her father's porcelains—and there were plenty of them, too!—first here and then there, rather than always to the same dealer. Here was Flora, who was forever demanding a new room or a new cupboard to hold the stuff that she bought and didn't need—just because she couldn't help buying. Oh, I

had the bad habit of spending all right!"

The other girls all looked sympathetically at Flora, for though they recognized the truth of what she alleged against herself, they were tender-hearted toward a Flora no longer able to indulge in the shopper's passion.

"Well," went on Flora, "you all know what happened when my father died. The usual thing! We had been living on a twenty-five-thousand-a-year basis off a capital that might have permitted us to be living on a two-thousand-a-year basis. And poor old dad had been spending capital instead of income, and had been speculating wildly to catch up with himself—and mother and I faced suddenly existence, on about six hundred a year. With mother an invalid at that, and accustomed to the most expensive 'treatments.' Oh, it was lovely!"

"The relatives all conferred. They took stock of my small accomplishments. I could play a little, sing a little—it was a pretty, undisturbing little noise from the music room when the men were playing billiards or smoking, but not the kind of music people expect their children to be taught in New York. I could embroider quite beautifully, but much less swiftly than the French nuns and the Italian factory hands, and I had a higher standard of living to maintain than the ladies who fasted for the good of their souls or the girls who ate garlic and black bread by habit. I couldn't compete with either class of embroiderers and make my postage stamps for the year.

"The relatives were appalled at my lack of useful knowledge. So, to tell the truth, was I. I was fairly panicky over it. I felt that they were probably right when they said that there was positively nothing for it but for me to marry—to marry well and p. d. q. But have you girls ever noticed how the suitors' carriages never block the way before your houses when you have made up your mind that they represent your only salvation? Not a man proposed to me for six months—and I say in no spirit of boastfulness that proposals—good, bad, indifferent, serious,

impassioned, and jocular—had been fortnightly occurrences with me from the time I came out. Perhaps all the young gentlemen thought it would be in bad taste to propose during my mourning; and some of them may have heard of father's affairs. At any rate, marriage seemed to be as poor an outlook for the support of mother and myself as music.

"Then, one morning, I was in Maude's studio or laboratory, or whatever she calls that silversmithy of hers, watching her do queer things with a sort of plumber's blower that she had there, and wondering if I could ever learn to be her assistant, and how much I could earn if I did learn; and wondering, too, why she, who looked so adorable in a big, strong blue apron, that covered her from her neck to her ankles, always looked so badly dressed in her real clothes. And by and by I was moved to say as much to her, with my friendly frankness.

"She didn't get mad—she was too busy with her little blowpipe. She only said:

"I know I dress like fury. Dress doesn't interest me. If some one else would dress me, I'd love it, but I can't spend my life with dressmakers and milliners and tailors, merely to look well in your foolish eyes."

"And I said dreamily, for I was only half listening to her: 'I know where there is an evening dress that was simply made for you!'

"And she interrupted me to snap: 'Well, for pity's sake, go and get it for me! I need one for Bertha's bridesmaids' dinner, and I hadn't an idea where to get it.'

"So I fished a tape measure out of Maude's finally resurrected workbasket. I took her measures, I insisted upon having the frock that fitted her best turned over to me, and I went and bought the blue-and-black chiffon I had in mind—it was a heavenly thundercloud effect, shot with some gold threads underneath—and had it altered to the measures I had taken. And for the first time in her life, she had a de-



"Study your bad habit, be honest with yourself, and own what it is. Then make capital out of it."

cent-looking evening dress—and my career was made.

"I am, if you please, a professional shopper. I will candidly confess to you that I have always supposed a professional shopper to be an extravagance, but now that I am one myself, I see her to be a true economy. I save people's time for them—the time of busy women. I save their energy, and I don't cost them a cent. Not all my sex is like me, not all thrive upon the sight, the sounds, the air, of shops of all de-

scriptions! And I am obliged to say that, when my customers will allow me, I dress them better, furnish their houses better, generally equip them better, than they do themselves.

"I don't insist upon having my own way about all their clothes, you know, as I did with Maude. If a red-haired woman tells me that she will have a strawberry-pink cloak, I do my gentle best to dissuade her, but if she is not dissuadable, I buy her strawberry pink. So far, my clients are mostly women

engaged in the arts and professions—people who honestly haven't the time or the energy to spend on shopping, as shopping should be done. They have 'come to me,' as we say in trade, through my friends—through the little group of girls whom I had always known, all of whom are more interested in anything on earth than in shops.

"If any one is going abroad to-morrow unexpectedly and wants a steamer trunk and a rug and steamer shoes and a soft hat, she has but to telephone me, and all those things are at her house—on approval—at once. Or, if her confidence in my judgment is complete, they are at her house, purchased outright and charged to me. If another woman wants to paper a summer cottage, I have samples sent to her, and I go over them all with her and take her order finally. She has avoided the hours of wandering from one decorator to another. If she wants a wedding present for her husband's second cousin, whom she has never seen, and never wants to see, she has but to state her price limit to me, and the present is bought. If she wants favors for a luncheon, prizes for a bridge, flowers for a dance—she needs only to telephone Flora, and the pretties are hers.

"It doesn't cost her a cent, you un-

derstand. The shops pay me a commission, and that is where my harvest comes in. I have always loved to shop; I have always been a spendthrift. I don't mean that I ever bought bad values, for I didn't; I was too seasoned a shopper for that. But the passion for buying used to lead me to buy things that I didn't need, didn't want, and had no room for. Now my lust for purchase is legitimately satisfied. I have, as I began by telling you, harnessed my fly-away bad habit, and it is harvesting me a neat income. And mother has almost as many kinds of treatment as before dad died.

"So that my advice to the untrained woman, cast suddenly on her own resources, is this: Study your bad habit; be honest with yourself, and own what it is. Then make capital out of it. For it will represent what you really love to do, and there's profit in all work done with the heart. Yes, my dear, I do know the shop where those wonderful little cakes come from. But I told you I didn't want to seem to be handing around a business card. This is a talk on the philosophy of labor, not an advertisement. Oh, very well, then! And my telephone number is so and so, and I may be communicated with personally until ten in the morning!"



Aunt Jeanie at Vespers

WHEN good, Presbyterian Aunt Jeanie came over from Scotland to visit her grandnieces in New York, she was horrified to find that they had so far forsaken the faith of their fathers as to attend an Episcopalian church; worse still, the highest of the high. She was, however, very fond of music, so, on her last Sunday in New York, she submitted to be dragged to their vesper services, after a good, substantial Presbyterian discourse in the morning.

Drums, trombones, flutes, harps, and the whole catalogue of musical instruments exhaled "sweet sounds," but Aunt Jeanie's immobile countenance never once relaxed.

Finally, on the way home, one niece could stand the suspense no longer.

"Aunt Jeanie," she cried appealingly, "now own up that it was beautiful. You did like the music, didn't you?"

Aunt Jeanie smiled a wintry smile.

"Oh, aye," she admitted grudgingly; "the music was gay an' fine eneuch, but sic a way to spend the Sawbath!"

TAMING CURLEY

by Frank X. Finnegan



Author of "Standing Guard," "Trailing Henry," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE



MRS. CURLEY set down her cup and glanced across the table at her husband, immured behind his newspaper.

"Michael," she said timidly, "I've been wantin' to speak to you about Honoria."

He lowered the paper and looked at her over the top of his glasses a trifle impatiently. Her interruption had come when he was in the midst of an editorial that emptied vials of wrath upon the city council; and Alderman Curley, being a leader in that honorable body, was deeply interested.

"What about her?" he asked shortly.

"Well, it's about Jimmie Dwyer," Mrs. Curley explained, plaiting the tablecloth and avoiding the glare that she knew was turned upon her from the other side of the table. "You know, Michael, they've been goin' together this past six months—"

"I know nothin' of the sort," Alderman Curley retorted, "and I don't want to hear it now. How is it I didn't know Joe Dwyer's son was dancin' around a daughter of mine until this late day? I'd have put a stop to it fast enough!"

"Be reasonable, Michael," Mrs. Curley urged. "Sure, why should the young people drag what troubles you have with Joe Dwyer into their affairs? 'Tis all politics with you, anyhow, and maybe next month or next

year will find yourself and Joe Dwyer eatin' out of the same dish."

"You're crazy, woman!" her husband countered. "Let's hear no more talk like that in this house."

He tossed the newspaper away, and rose abruptly. Not even the condemnatory editorial could hold his attention against the domestic cataclysm that his wife's halting announcement seemed to forecast.

"What was it you were goin' to tell me?" he demanded, after taking a turn of the room in silence.

There was no question in his mind as to what she intended to reveal, but it had long been the alderman's custom, in politics and business, to see the cards on the table before making a move.

"Now, don't go flyin' off the handle, Michael," Mrs. Curley replied soothingly. "'Twas only that Honoria was tellin' me the other evening that she'd promised Jimmie Dwyer, and she wanted me to speak to you so you might be more decent to his father, if you should meet him anywhere."

It had taken all of what fragments of courage Mrs. Curley had retained, after twenty-five years of residence in the shadow of the alderman's dominating personality, to enable her to make this announcement with even a semblance of sang-froid. Few details of the Dwyer-Curley feud were unknown to the patient little woman, for whose information they had been rehearsed early and late by her liege lord as recurring campaigns brought new evi-

dence that the district was not large enough for two leaders.

Until now, however, the factional struggle had not touched her save in the larger sense. She had small love for the political game, because of her intimate views behind the scenes during the greater part of her married life, and because, too, it had made a barrier between her husband and his family.

The party, the "machine," the caucus, had ever come first to Michael Curley, and what time he could spare from their myriad demands he had given to his home life. And in the later years, his constant struggle with Joe Dwyer for the supremacy had encroached more than ever upon what spare hours he spent under his own roof.

To all this, Mrs. Curley had gradually, but ever resentfully, accustomed herself. Politics was the breath of life to her husband, and, more than that, it meant in various ways the swelling of the Curley bank account, which had assumed far more imposing figures than it would likely have done had Michael remained a marble setter. It was inevitable that she should conquer what resentments she had for her husband's avocation.

But that politics, through its by-product, the factional feud, should thrust itself between Honoria and potential happiness was not to be included in the scheme of things as Mrs. Curley viewed them. When the girl had come to her with the trembling confession that she had given her heart into the keeping of James Aloysius Dwyer, heir presumptive to all the spleen and hatreds that the Curley faction had visited upon his father, Mrs. Curley had promptly made in her own soul a declaration of independence, the primal clause of which was that Curley's political entanglements should not interfere with this marriage.

"So that's it, eh?" the alderman said, when she had concluded her dynamic statement. "Honoria's promised Jimmie Dwyer! In all the broad United States, she could pick nobody that would do her for a husband but the son of my enemy! That's the return

I get from the pair of you for all I've done for her! This is what they teach them at finishin' school, is it? To honor your father by marryin' into the family that's thrived to disgrace and degrade him!"

"What has the child to do with all that?" Mrs. Curley demanded, when he paused for breath. "She's goin' to marry Jimmie Dwyer—not his father or his father's political club. Have a little sense, man!"

"Mary Ellen," Alderman Curley declared, fixing her with an impressive forefinger, "let me tell you somethin' before this business goes any farther. Honoria is not goin' to marry Joe Dwyer's son."

"He's a fine, decent boy," his wife interrupted. "He belongs to the Knights of Columbus, and he's had the middle aisle of Father Gavin's church at ten-o'clock mass for these last three years. There isn't a thing you can say against him, Michael Curley!"

"Except that Joe Dwyer is his father," the alderman retorted, "and whin I've said that, I've said plinty. That's enough about it. You tell Honoria for me that she can look farther, but she couldn't fare worse."

"Indeed, I'll do nothin' of the sort!" she promptly declared. "'Tis not your ward club you're thyrin' to rule now, Michael. If Honoria wants to marry Jimmie Dwyer, mark my words, she'll marry him, and ask no odds of you! And she'll be read out in church and married in her own parish, at that!"

"What talk have you?" he demanded, frowning darkly. "Am I the head of this house, or am I a boarder here?"

"Oh, the day is gone by for that sort of talk, Michael," the little woman boldly responded. "Time was when every poor girl was led around by the nose if her father happened to think he didn't like the family tree of the man she was goin' to marry. They have more sense these days. 'Tis their own bed they're makin' when they marry—not their father's. And they don't feel called upon to move heaven and earth to please him, thank you! Why, you should be proud and glad to have your

daughter get a fine young man like Jimmie Dwyer for a husband! When she marries him, they'll never look to you for a nickel, and you'll have a son-in-law who will hold himself far above the dirty political puddle in which his father and his father-in-law squabbled!"

With which declaration of war, Mrs. Curley swept from the room as majestically as her scant inches would permit, leaving her amazed husband to stand staring after her amid what seemed to be a wreck of worlds.

In the Dwyer household news of the approaching nuptials that would join it to the house of Curley was received with more equanimity. James Aloysius, being an only son, had long been accustomed to getting just about what he wanted. An education in the law had been one of his earlier desires, and this the belligerent politician had cheerfully afforded him, it having been the fruit of his observation that lawyers got to the top in politics a trifle more speedily than any other class of climbers in that crowded field.

That his son showed no leaning toward the absorbing game by which he had been so long enthralled and which had brought him little save an unending battle with the faction of Michael Curley, was but a minor disappointment to Dwyer.

He felt assured that James Aloysius would bend his shoulders for the mantle of his father when the proper time came, and that meanwhile what paths he elected to follow were unquestionably those best fitted for his feet. Wherefore his announcement that he intended marrying Honoria Curley, while it occasioned surprise, developed none of the opposition that it had stirred up in the rival camp.

"She's a good girl, James," his father assured him; "and it's a fine family, if it wasn't for her blatherskite of a father. How he'll take it, I don't know."

"I'm not worrying much about it," James Aloysius declared. "It's Honoria I'm going to marry, you know. If the old man doesn't like it, he doesn't even

need to come to the wedding. We'll have a crowd without him."

"Oh, yes. Devil a doubt o' that!" Dwyer acquiesced. "But he's a hard man. 'Twould be like him to put his foot down and tell Honoria she couldn't marry you—on account of me, of course," he hastily added.

"I'd like to see him try it!"

Jimmie doubled up the unlawfullike fists that had descended to him from generations of hard workers, and thrust out a combative chin. This possibility had not occurred to him, in his blissful contemplation of the future.

"Oh, he's the lad that would do it in a minute," his father continued, "thinkin' in one way 'twould be squarin' things with me, and in another 'twould be savin' his girl from the family of Old Nick, meanin' me."

"And do you think Honoria would pay any attention to him?" Jimmie demanded.

Dwyer laughed softly to himself for a few moments as he contemplated the possibilities of the situation with the mind of a born fighter.

"Faith, I don't," he said, then, "because she's Curley's daughter."

Before the end of the week, James Aloysius learned that his father's prediction had been well founded—the fiat of Michael Curley had gone forth that there could be no union between his house and that of Joseph Dwyer.

On the second evening after his talk with his father, young Dwyer called on Honoria. As usual, the alderman was abroad in the district, patching up a hole here and there in his political fences, and it was Mrs. Curley who met the expectant suitor with a doleful countenance.

"I don't know what to say to you, Jimmie," she began, "but Michael has been carryin' on like a wild man since I told him about you and Honoria. He says you're not to see her any more."

"What?" shouted young Mr. Dwyer. "Not see her any more? Does he understand that we're engaged to be married?"

"Yes, that's what started him," Mrs. Curley admitted. "I told him the other



*"Mary Ellen," Alderman Curley declared, fixing her with an impressive
Honoria is not goin' to*



forefinger, "let me tell you somethin' before this business goes any farther.
marry Joe Dwyer's son."

day—Honoria asked me to break it to him. We've not had peace or ease ever since, Jimmie. When he's not bully-raggin' about your father, the poor man, and all he's done to him these years past, he's holdin' Honoria and me up to shame for thinkin' of such a thing as her marryin' you."

Jimmie sat down on the edge of a divan in the parlor, where his very presence was proscribed, and considered the situation frowningly.

"I suppose I should have expected something like this," he said; "but I never thought of his putting in his oar until my father suggested it. So he says I can't have her, eh?"

"And that you can't see her or talk to her, or even telephone to her," Mrs. Curley added.

"Well, you don't think for a minute I'm going to stand for that?" he suggested. "Where is Honoria?"

"She's gone to her Aunt Ellen's for a few days," Mrs. Curley explained. "Her father is talkin' about sendin' her to Ireland with my sister for a long vacation."

"Look here, Mrs. Curley," he said suddenly, "you're with us in this, aren't you? You're not going to help him in any foolishness about keeping us apart?"

"I'll do what I can for you, Jimmie," she said cautiously.

"Then give me Aunt Ellen's address," he urged, "and don't be surprised at anything that happens."

"You'll not be rash, Jimmie," she cautioned. "We can't have any runnin' away or anythin' like that, you know. If Honoria's to be married, it must be here at home, in her own church."

"Don't worry," James Aloysius reassured her. "They taught me the rules when I was a kid in school. But give me that address."

The organization of the "Newly-weds," James A. Dwyer, president, as a political force in Alderman Curley's district, was a novelty of sufficient picturesqueness and possibility to attract widespread newspaper mention. It was made up of bridegrooms, real or pros-

pective, since each member was obliged to swear that he had not been married more than two years or, if unmarried, that he intended becoming a benedick within a twelvemonth.

Young Mr. Dwyer it was who dug up the names from parish registers and wedding announcements in the newspapers, from the records of real-estate agents, and other likely sources of information. Among the members of athletic and social clubs, of fraternal and church societies with which he and his intimates were connected, he ran down rumors of engagements by the score and made red-faced young men own up that they intended taking the plunge before a year was past.

These he lined up in the new organization with the serious-minded young husbands whose obligations as the heads of families rested so heavily upon their shoulders. And it was by dint of argument, as much as through his personal popularity, that he accomplished the task.

"We young men will have to get together and organize and vote as a unit if we expect to get anything done for us," he told them. "The business men have their organizations to secure what legislation they are after, the landlords have their protective associations, the mechanics have their unions, and it's time that young married men and prospective husbands got together for their own good."

"What's the idea?" a tentative candidate for membership asked him. "I don't feel particularly downtrodden."

"No, but you don't know what you're missing," Mr. Dwyer assured him. "You haven't stopped to reckon up what privileges and benefits we might acquire if we had the organized strength to go out and demand them of our law-makers. They pay no attention to a request. The only thing that will bring them to time is a demand, backed by the votes that can make or unmake them."

"For instance, there is this thing of barring a young married couple with little children from leasing an apartment, on the ground that the children

will be a nuisance to the neighbors. We all know what an imposition and an outrage that is on growing families. Suppose our organization, spreading all over the city, were strong enough to force the city council to pass an ordinance making it illegal to refuse to lease an apartment on such grounds. Can't you see what a benefit it would be all around?

"Then there is this thing of peddlers and hucksters and old clo' men shouting and bellowing in the streets at all hours of the day. That ought to be stopped. It wakes up babies taking their naps and worries their mothers. But as it's nobody's business to have it stopped, it goes right on. That's where we'll come in with our organization—absolutely nonpartisan, and you might say nonpolitical, but devoted to the interests of young married folks and their families."

There was no resisting this line of argument, which was spread with equal facility by a dozen of young Dwyer's chums with the enthusiasm that springs from success, and the roster of the Newlyweds grew apace. Joe Dwyer, looking on from the side lines, was overjoyed by Jimmie's sudden display of interest in the political game.

"I knew you'd come to it, Jimmie," he said. "'Tis the duty of every citizen to take a hand in shapin' the government—and to keep it out of the hands of the Curleys, if he can. How many votes have you now in your club?"

"About four hundred and fifty," James Aloysius replied modestly, "but I think we'll have a thousand by Election Day. It's only a month off."

"Well, this ought to settle Curley," the older man commented.

"Don't make any mistake about this, father," Jimmie warned. "Our organization is out to battle for principles—not necessarily to defeat individuals."

Mr. Dwyer smoked in silence for a few moments, cogitating on this declaration, which was a trifle above his political plane.

"Do you see Honoria Curley these days, Jimmie?" he asked, then.

"Once in a while," returned James Aloysius, with a smile.

"Humph! I thought so," his father returned, and the subject was dropped.

It was a fortnight before the election, and the roll of the Newlyweds had climbed above the seven hundred mark, when President Dwyer made a formal call upon Alderman Curley, who was a worried candidate for reelection.

"I might as well tell you before you open your mouth that there's no use in your talkin' to me," the alderman declared. "I wouldn't have a daughter of mine married into your family——"

"Just a minute, alderman," Mr. Dwyer interrupted. "You haven't got the idea at all. I didn't come here to talk to you about Honoria. I came to invite you to address my club, the Newlyweds, on the issues of the campaign. You know I'm president of the new organization," he added.

Alderman Curley looked him over a few moments in surprise.

"Sit down, Jimmie," he said, then. "Let's hear about this. I was readin' somethin' of it in the newspapers."

"I'll bet you were!" Jimmie laughed. "Catch you overlooking anything in print about this district! Well, there's been so much printed about us you probably know what we stand for, as well as I do."

"Well, I've read more or less about the organization," Curley admitted cautiously, "and I'm not sayin' there isn't a deal of sense in what you're goin' after. How many votes have you now, Jimmie?"

"About seven hundred. How about making a little talk at a meeting Saturday night? You can stand for our principles that long, can't you?"

"I'll be there, Jimmie," Candidate Curley declared fervently, "and I'll read up a bit on what the club is out after. Have you had Heldon over there yet?" he asked.

"No, I haven't thought of that," Dwyer said, with a grin. "They tell me he's makin' a great run against you."

"Do they, now?" Curley inquired anxiously. "Where do you hear that?"

"Oh, we hear it around," Dwyer said.



Alderman Curley, introduced by the young president in person, made the speech of his life.

"But you come over to our headquarters and make a talk Saturday night—it won't do you a bit of harm."

The alderman, struck by a sudden thought, drew himself up a bit stiffly.

"Jimmie, does your father know you were comin' to see me to-night?" he demanded.

"My father doesn't belong to the Newlyweds—he couldn't get in on account of the age limit," James Aloysius responded. "And he doesn't concern himself much with what we're doing. I'm running this show myself, and I can assure you he knows nothing about my plans of having you address the club."

"Um-hum," Curley said slowly. "I was wonderin'."

That Alderman Curley, head and front of the opposition to Joe Dwyer's faction, was to address the unique and well-advertised organization presided over by Joe Dwyer's son, made the voters of the district sit up and stare when they read the announcement in the newspapers. Some of the other leading spirits in the Newlyweds, who had assumed that it would be anti-Curley because of the prominence of James Aloysius in its councils, sought out that cheery young man and demanded to know what it was all about.

"Merely giving him a chance to declare himself," Jimmie explained. "He's asking for our votes, and I thought he ought to have a chance to show us where he stands on the matters we're going to work for."

"And are you going to have Heldon, the other candidate, make a talk before the club, too?" an inquirer persisted.

"U-m-m, no," Mr. Dwyer admitted. "I'm afraid there won't be time for that. I just happened to think of Curley in time. Besides, he's an alderman," he added, "and he's entitled to some consideration before public bodies like ours."

As it developed, "Curley night" at the Newlyweds' headquarters was the feature of the campaign in that particular district. From some mysterious source, placards and handbills by the

hundreds appeared advertising the meeting, so that none could plead ignorance of the occasion. Equally mysterious, even to Alderman Curley and his campaign lieutenants, was the appearance of a band wagon with flaring signs and an untiring squad of musicians, which paraded the streets all day long and tooted urgent requests to all beholders to go and listen to Honorable Michael Curley on "Laws for the People"—a subject with which, in the past, that distinguished lawmaker had not greatly concerned himself.

The result of this carefully planned exploitation was a tremendous outpouring, both of members of the Newlyweds and of curious outsiders, who, having read much of Dwyer's organization, were anxious to see it in action. Alderman Curley, introduced by the young president in person, made the speech of his life, according to enthusiastic admirers who had listened to all of his speeches; there were talks by various orators of the organization; the band played; the ubiquitous suffragettes were permitted to have their say concerning "Votes for Women"; and, altogether, it was a great night.

How great it was for him and his candidacy even Curley did not appreciate, as he stood on the stage shaking hands with eager young voters when the meeting was over. He was thankful to young Dwyer for having invited him there—that was beyond dispute. But somehow he had a vague feeling, grounded in the egotism inseparable from public life, that Jimmie Dwyer had used him to advertise the Newlyweds—had asked him to address the meeting because he knew that he, Alderman Curley, would be a strong drawing card, and certain to attract publicity.

"This is quite a club you have here, Jimmie," he admitted, when he was parting with the president. "I suppose it will vote pretty nearly solid—on an indorsement of candidates, for instance?"

James Aloysius looked at him wisely. "I'm thinking some of getting up a little 'slate,' he said. "It might be a



Alderman Curley shook the proffered hand, and twisted his cigar in most apparent agitation.

good idea. This is new to most of the boys—they'll vote the way the officers suggest."

"Um-hum!" mused the alderman, looking up at the stars. "That's what I was thinkin'. Good night, Jimmie. I'm much obliged to you," he added, as he hurried away.

It was a tremendous concession to make to a Dwyer.

When the votes were counted on elec-

tion night, Michael Curley was reelected by a majority of four hundred and thirty-eight. Heldon had made a tremendous run, and Curley's old-time majority of over a thousand had dwindled down to three figures.

As he sat in headquarters, reading the returns and mopping his brow over his fading majority in precinct after precinct, it was suddenly borne in upon him that but for the Newlyweds he would undoubtedly have been beaten. The flare that young Dwyer had given his candidacy had most probably influenced enough votes to save him from the defeat that his rushing adversary had almost brought upon him. Four hundred and thirty-eight votes did not make up an army, but it was a number sufficient to save the day.

He rose heavily, his joy in his triumph tempered by his realization of the nearness of defeat, and made his way through the laughing, cheering, congratulating crowd in the headquarters rooms. He intended to seek Jimmie Dwyer, by telephone if no

other way offered, and thank him for what he had done.

But before he left the rooms he espied the president of the Newlyweds, the center of an enthusiastic crowd of admirers. After a few moments he called him aside, and, in a hallway, they found a vacant spot.

"Jimmie, this is a big thing you've done for me—you and your club," the alderman said. "I want ye to know

that I appreciate 'twas your Newlywed chaps that put me over to-day, and I give ye my word that I'll do what I can for your club while I'm in office."

"Forget it, so far as I'm concerned," young Mr. Dwyer cheerfully suggested. "And I don't think the club will bother you much. The fact is, alderman, the Newlyweds have done their work, and they're very likely to disband any old day now."

"They've done their work?" Curley repeated, staring.

"Well, the larger part of it," Jimmie laughed. "And I want to congratulate you, too, on your reelection. I forgot it until now. It looks like some of our boys stood behind you in the face of a pretty stiff fight, all right."

Alderman Curley shook the proffered hand, and twisted his cigar in most apparent agitation.

"Jimmie, I'm afraid I was a thrifle hasty in that matther of my girl, Honoria," he said. "I hope you'll not think hard of me—I did what I thought was for the best."

"Not a bit of it!" James Aloysius declared. "I can see your point of view perfectly, of course."

"And I want ye to know," went on the embarrassed alderman, "that I have no objection in the world to you callin' on Honoria—she'll be comin' home tomorrow."

"Yes, so she told me," Jimmie interposed.

Mr. Curley looked at him sharply.

"She told you?" he said suspiciously. "Why, how was that? Where did you see her?"

"At Aunt Ellen's," James Aloysius declared sweetly. "I've been going up there right along when there wasn't a meeting of the Newlyweds or something to do with the campaign. Mrs. Cassidy is a fine old lady—she went to dinner with Honoria and me three or

four times, and, believe me, she knows what to eat and how to order it!"

Alderman Curley listened to these revelations in grave silence, but a smile began to steal across his face when Mr. Dwyer concluded.

"Jimmie, you're the devil's own pigeon," he said. "I'm beginnin' to believe that Newlyweds club was a campaign scheme—"

"Don't do too much guessing," Jimmie suggested. "And, by the way, Honoria and I are going to be married the second week in December."

Curley gasped.

"If it wasn't for your father—" he began.

"What's the matter with my father?" Jimmie smilingly demanded. "Here he is, now—let's tell him to his face."

The alderman turned quickly, to find Joe Dwyer approaching. But instead of the glare with which he was usually regarded by his opponent, Dwyer's face was wreathed in smiles.

"Jimmie, I congratulate you, me boy!" he said. "It was great work!"

He turned to Curley.

"Alderman, did you ever see better campaign work done than what this lad of mine put over for you?" he demanded.

"It was fine work, Dwyer," the alderman admitted stiffly.

"And do you still think you want to keep a boy like that out of your family?" Dwyer demanded. "Do you imagine for a minute you could get along without him?"

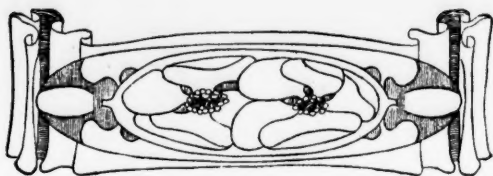
"I'm afraid he isn't goin' to give me a chance to do that," Curley said, looking down on Jimmie, with a smile.

"Well, what do you think?" Dwyer asked impatiently.

The alderman slowly extended his hand to his ancient enemy.

"Joe," he said. "I think we're a couple of old fools!"





The Success Line

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "Flower of Adversity," "The Honeymoon," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

UPON the couch in her dressing room at the Princess, the star completely relaxed. None of those noisy, applauding hundreds over the footlights beyond the sacred portal could realize what even a single curtain call was, after those five minutes of intense emotion. She would like to favor them—she would like to oblige them, to acknowledge their courtesy. Some players catered to that sort of thing; it was as the breath of life to their nostrils. But to her the utter silence, the rapt attention, the myriad staring faces in which, as in one, her every gesture, her every sentiment, was reflected, meant to her more than the thunder of the parquet and the whistling of the gallery.

Besides, it was her theory that curtain calls broke the continuity of the stage life, and changed it from the real to the unreal. So she let the tumult die. Her manager knew better than to disturb her. She must gather herself together for her next feat, at the close of the act whose first scene was now being set.

Her maid was out. She wanted nobody present to make her nervous. As she reclined, in comfortable negligee, she could see herself in the long mirror. The sight was pleasing to her. She was keeping her looks. Face and figure—they were not everything, but

they were something. An actress finds some satisfaction in being accounted beautiful as well as great; and she knew as well as anybody that very few of her most fancy photographs exaggerated her.

The room also satisfied her. It was a fit setting for her, the star who had been chosen to open the new theater—this, the most sumptuous playhouse in the great city now recognized as the dramatic center of the West. She had been brought from two thousand miles away to emphasize the opening. "Beautiful," "talented," "great"—thus she had been signalized, to insure the success of the theater from the start.

She smiled lazily at herself in perfect content.

Upon the door sounded an inquiring tap. Her smile changed to a slight frown. The orders, as all should know, were that she must not be sought out by friend or stranger when she was resting.

"Who is it?" she queried.

"May I come?"

It was a feminine voice. Another newspaper reporter, then. To a discerning public press she owed much—that she knew; and mindful of her obligations, she called out, although unwillingly:

"Come!"

The door was opened gently. The



"The story of your life, told in one column, with photograph," repeated the other, still smiling.

figure that appeared, hesitating upon the threshold, was, of course, the reporter; a slight, womanly person, diffident, yet no doubt persistent.

"Come in, please, and shut the door," bade the star. "Is it important that you see me? I am resting."

"Very important. But don't get up,



"Aren't you coming in?" she challenged.

Netta," smiled her visitor, and stepped forward. "You think I'm a reporter. Well, give me the story of your life."

The star did sit up, to scan her visitor, puzzled. Netta! Who was there in this part of the country to call her by that first name?

"The story of your life, told in one column, with photograph," repeated the other, still smiling. Then she laughed. "And you don't know me yet!"

The star gasped.

"Mary Briggs!" she exclaimed. "You! Oh, but I'm glad to see you! What a surprise! Come right here!"

She half rose; they rushed together; at the close of the embrace, the star pulled her friend down upon the couch,

and, holding fast to her two hands, beamed at her. The heart emotions of the star were not all confined to the stage.

"Oh!" she reiterated. "I *am* glad to see you! And to think that I didn't recognize you for a minute! Would you have known me?"

"How could I help it when you're all over town?"

"I suppose. But how did you get through? And why didn't you send word?"

"How? Well, I walked right in. I knew where to come —"

"Of course," nodded the star.

"And I didn't send word because I wanted to surprise you. Goodness! How swell you are, here, Netta! I mustn't forget that you're a great actress now. What a success you're making! I'm

so proud of you!"

"Yes," admitted the star, "I'm quite getting on these days. But you, dear—what about you? Do you know, I've lost track of you completely? I was abroad for a time; and since then I've looked and looked in the theatrical magazines, and through other players' news, and I couldn't recognize you in a single name. So for mercy's sake do tell me what is the name you're using." And: "You're still on the stage, aren't you?" added the star anxiously.

Her friend flushed and smiled demurely.

"Yes, I'm still on the stage; but I'm not at all famous; not at all, Netta. I'm only Helen van Doren—and I'm sure

you never heard of *her*. No, no," and she intercepted the star's ready hand, reaching for a theatrical journal that lay upon the little stand. "I'm not there. It won't do you any good to look, and we'll only be wasting time."

"You always were much cleverer than I, though," protested the star. "Do you remember the old Alhambra, Mary?"

"And how we fairly fought one another to be understudy to Miss Webster?"

"And how she never had even a cold?"

"And how the height of our ambition was to wear a real ball dress with a train?"

"And how your first line was just 'Ah!' and you said it in the wrong place?"

"And how they gave it to you, and you did the same?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" laughed the star. "What stage-struck chits we were! And that terrible Alhambra!"

"And what a change to this!" professed her friend generously. "Now tell me about yourself, Netta. For a long time I didn't guess that this was you—this new star that had suddenly shone out in the firmament. How does it feel to be famous? You're looking so splendidly, too!"

The star was conscious that even friendship was not coloring fact. She was, indeed, looking splendidly—and in the mirror the contrast between herself and her caller seemed striking. Mary Briggs certainly had faded. Suddenly the star felt sorry for her.

"Thank you, dear. Have you been out in front? Or didn't you see me?"

"Indeed, I saw you," proclaimed Mary Briggs. "And I came back to tell you how proud I am of you. I couldn't wait. To think that you're the big, fat girl who was my best friend and worst rival when we started upon our 'careers'! Tell me how it happened. No, not happened; it didn't 'happen,' of course, but how you won out, and how it feels to be a great and beautiful star."

"Oh, as to me, I merely worked hard, and I suppose I've been lucky, and here

I am. You can find out about *me* in the *papers*." And she laughed. "I don't think that there's any part of me in darkness, by this time. But you, dear." And, speaking more gently, she scanned her friend. "Tell me about yourself. Helen van Doren? That's a pretty name. What is it you're doing; comedy, tragedy? You always were fond of the 'heavy,' I remember; a sort of a female Julius Cæsar. Weren't we absurd? But what is it, and where, and how?"

The visitor colored, and laughed—or tried to laugh. Yes, Mary Briggs had faded; she had faded. What a pity! In the old days she had been such a little beauty. But unless one is successful and can be luxurious, the stage is a hard life, on beauty.

"What is it, and where, and how?" repeated the visitor. "My dear, I told you that I don't amount to much. Comedy, or tragedy, or melodrama—I accept all, whatever comes. But I'm willing now to pass up the tragedy. And I'm just in a little stock company, on the other side of the city. That's why I was able to come here to-night, you see."

"Oh! A permanent stand?" asked the star. "Why, I think that's delightful. It's so much better than being on the road. My dear, I quite envy you." The star could afford to be indulgent. "I *hate* traveling. And a little stock company of that kind is the ideal life, I think, for a player, especially a woman. But what theater is it? Have I ever heard of it, I wonder?"

"W-well," faltered her caller, rather painfully, "it's only a small place. We call it the Home Theater. I don't suppose it's listed. The company owns it."

"An enticing name, anyway," praised the star brightly. "Are you doing well with it, dear?"

"Yes," said her visitor; and the star, with shrewd, but kindly, eye on her worn garb and tired face, did not believe her.

"How many are there in your company?"

"Five, Netta."

"Is that enough?"

"We think so. It's all we ought to afford, just now."

"And what kind of a house do you usually have, dear? Full?"

"Well, we'd be glad to have it fuller. But it's very appreciative."

"That's a great satisfaction, anyhow, isn't it?" purred the star. She paused, thoughtful. "Mary," she said, "I believe you can do better. You come with me. I can make a place for you, right in this company. Yes, I can. The manager will agree. I know of a speaking part for you, a good one. I'll get you the lines and you can join at once."

Her visitor again flushed.

"Thank you, dear; but I can't," she replied. "I'm under contract to my own manager. He depends on me. I mustn't leave him."

"You talk like the leading lady—only in rather a different vein than the usual haughty leading lady," smiled the star curiously.

"I am," declared her visitor.

"But, my dear girl," protested the star, "your manager ought not to object. Think what it will mean to him—to the theater: The leading lady of the—what is it?—Home Theater Stock Company has accepted a prominent part with Miss Gardener! It will be a feather in his cap. Try him and see. Or I'll try him. I'll see him myself."

Her visitor shook her head; her eyes filled; she smiled wanly.

"No, dear," she resisted. "I can't. You're as good as gold, to want me; but I can't. Really, I'm content to stay with him."

"You're wasting your talent, I'm afraid," commented the star. "However—no matter. And if ever you change your mind, you know I can help you to make good. But, anyway, you must take dinner with me. You'll stay till after the play, and then we'll go off together and have a nice, long visit. You don't go back to-night, do you?"

"Oh, I must," pleaded the other. "I'll sit through your next act, Netta, and then I ought to hurry back. It's quite a way, out where I live. So I can't dine with you, dear. But I did so want to have just a minute's chat with you

Now it's nearly your cue, isn't it? I'm afraid I've disturbed you."

"Nonsense," declared the star. "Then you won't even lunch with me?" They rose, together, still holding hands. "Why can't I come out and see you? To-morrow. May I?"

"Will you?"

"Certainly. In the morning." The star rapidly calculated that perhaps car fare meant considerable to her visitor. "I'll have somebody drive me out, in a machine. We can lunch together out there—can't we? Where is it? How do I find you?"

"Will you?" Her visitor spoke impulsively. "Will you, really, Netta? It's good of you!"

"Not at all. Of course I will. Don't you suppose I want to see all of you that I can? Where is it?"

"Well, it's the same place. I'll write down the address."

"Oh! At the theater. The Home Theater, you mean?"

"Yes," said the other simply. "I live there, you know."

"In rooms. That's convenient, too."

And, reflected the star, it must be cheaper.

"Yes," continued the other. "I have rooms there. Here's the address. I'll be watching for you."

"All right, dear. I'll be there, by noon. Good-by."

"Good-by."

They kissed. As the visitor went out, the maid came in. It was time for the star to be attired.

The address was plain; but upon looking through the directory for the theater, to satisfy her curiosity, the star did not find it listed. However, the directory was a year old; and, anyway, the chauffeur said that he could easily drive to the number given. It was just across the city—as Mary had said.

But when, after an hour's trip, the machine halted at the curb and the chauffeur scratched his head, the star, puzzled, scanning the neighborhood, felt that some error had been made.

"Is this the place?" dubiously asked the chauffeur. "There's the number."



"It's been a long time," she offered shyly, "since I have had anything to do with a juvenile part—like this."

"Oh, it can't be!" she cried. "Are you sure?" They had been scouring a very plain portion of the city, and had stopped before one of the least of

the cottages on the humblest of streets. "Is it the name and number you have on the slip?"

"According to the sign on the

corner back there. It ain't the place, then?"

"No. I want a theater. The Home Theater."

"I'd better go in and inquire," he murmured. "The street may be labeled wrong. They're all the time changing street names."

He was interrupted. The star's friend herself came out from the front door, and down to the gate. She wore a pretty blue dress; but it was she.

"Aren't you coming in?" she challenged.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the star. "I thought we'd made a mistake. You said theater, didn't you? Or—what?"

The chauffeur opened the car door, the star descended. Her friend slipped an arm through hers, and led her on, into the house. From the end of the hall peeped upon them two small children, a boy and a girl. It was a tiny house, but sweet and clean.

The star sank into a chair.

"You did say theater," she accused.

The woman in blue laughed.

"Dear, have I offended? Ought I to apologize? This is my only theater—the *Home Theater*. See it? I'm married; that's all."

"But the stock company——"

"I'm the leading lady, as I claimed," laughed the woman in blue. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks were pink with excitement, as she bravely made her points. "There are two other members, looking in at us. Here, dears; come here." And she called in the small boy and girl. They responded shyly. "That is three. And here's a fourth—he's the juvenile." She stepped swiftly into the next room, and returned with a baby. "The fifth is John, my manager—and husband. He'll be here in a minute, for his nooning. And I'm Helen van Doren. He likes my middle name best."

The star sat confounded. The baby gurgled and kicked in its mother's lap. And she, the woman in blue, pressed it close, and across its chubby form returned the star gaze for gaze. It might have been the becoming dress, it might have been the excitement; but sudden-

ly the star was struck with the thought that Mary Briggs had not faded. On the contrary, she was beautiful!

With a quick motion, the star threw off her coat and hat.

"Give him to me, Mary," she bade.

"Let me hold him; please." She adjusted the baby upon her own lap. "It's been a long time," she offered shyly, "since I have had anything to do with a juvenile part—like this."

John appeared. He was a carpenter, as Mary had explained while, having reluctantly laid aside the baby, the star insisted upon helping her put on the luncheon that was a dinner; a carpenter, but a good one, getting his four dollars and a half a day. The star, who could command this much a minute, agreed that John was a most desirable "manager."

John, in his semiworking garb, seemed abashed at first; but no one could be abashed long before the star, who was graciousness itself, and more than graciousness. So, as the dinner progressed, they all sat talking together like old friends. It occurred to the star that in this, Mary's "Home Theater," she had been admitted to the noblest stage in America.

If the woman in blue retained any furtive qualms, they were dispelled at the last, when the star must go.

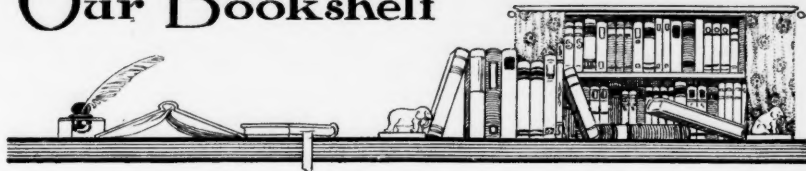
"Can you forgive me? Maybe I ought to have explained, more fully, in your room last night."

The star held her two hands.

"I forgive! Dear, can you forgive me? To think that I asked *you* to join *my* company! And I dreamed of helping you to 'make good'! Do you know, I wish—I wish that I might only join your company. For you're the one who has made good. You're the success, Mary Briggs van Doren. May I come again, some time?"

The machine had been whirring impatiently. She entered. It rolled away with her. The woman in blue, and the two children, and even the baby, waved after her. And the chauffeur concluded that this must have been the right place, after all—but a queer one, and not much of a theater about it.

Our Bookshelf



Some Jackals of Literature—and One Other

By Anna Alice Chapin

SOMEWHERE in "Virginibus Puerisque"—I have not a Stevenson by me, and cannot quote correctly—he whom Benson calls the "fresh and vivid student of the human mind" scoffs heartily at the old, obstinate ideals that at one day were held to be the height of stability and worthiness. "What," he says—or to that effect—"if I am told that I shall feel very differently a year hence? I hope I may! I shall be a year older, and ought to feel a year differently!"

Herein, I think, the sane and sound soul found the root of our complex, shifting standards. It is not mere public fickleness that sends us helter-skelter after soap bubbles; it is because we somehow become conscious that we have reached a point where soap bubbles would be good for us. It is the inherent, inborn, human need for something fresh to fit into the eternally fresh aspects of our ever-changing human conditions.

In this we have reactions, and revolutions, exaggerations, mistakes, and that exuberance which city editors call "slopping over." But life is full of just these things—good, clean, normal, mortal life; why expect the standards of literature alone to be immutable? Authors—real authors, not people who write—presumably know their public as a physician knows the pulse and respiration of a case. When they suddenly flood the market places of the world with inexplicable stuff, which the people gobble up as greedily as their pocketbooks allow, it doesn't merely

happen. As a certain advertisement puts it, "there's a reason."

The pity of it is that fools rush in where angels, albeit fearfully, tread with ease and felicity. The world, as has, I believe, been mentioned before, produces an astonishing daily output of fools. Why so large a percentage of them write books is a problem for the psychologists and the alienists, rather than the critics. The fact remains that they do write them—overwrite them, write them to surfeit, full and running over. And by an uncanny alchemy—or is it thought transference on a mighty scale?—they, no less than the true gods, seem to know what it is that the public needs and wants.

Even Tabaqui, the Jackal, who follows the noble hunting wolf, has an appetite. He, too, knows what is nutritious and succulent, though his palate may not be so delicate, his discrimination not so fastidious.

Tabaqui is the jungle outcast—he is abhorred by the free and strong, and preys only upon the weaker and more timid beasts. Kipling has introduced him in a dozen fanciful fashions—but always as something sly, cowardly, and unclean, something dependent on braver and stronger creatures for his very existence, and loathed and shunned by all wholesome beings. Yet he lives, and sometimes lives well, in his jackal fashion, and utterly silly creatures, or those that have been wounded or trapped, are his meat. The simile holds, you will find.

The little writer man—or, oftener,

writer woman—recognizes the public craving for this or that element or quantity, and supplies it. And it is very, very bad. And the great masses read the rotten little books—they can get them cheap, or from a library—while the big, epoch-making models, with their gigantic scope and message to humanity, go unread. And then the Comstocks, and the purity leagues, and so on, say: "*What are we coming to if this is the trend of our art and literature?*"

Sudermann writes a "*Song of Songs*"—simple, masterly, and terrible; and Horace Newte follows with his sordid London "*Sparrows*." Wells gives us a living, breathing "*Ann Veronica*," and we are obliged to wallow in "*His Hour*"—a book as unintelligent and unphysiological as it is prurient. After "*Jennie Gerhardt*"—so hardly, coldly, admirably written that I defy the most erotic reader to gain a thrill therefrom—we have had what? Among other atrocities, various novels purporting to be "from the French," a terrible trifle called "*Poppy*"—I hope I have not forgotten the name; I took good care to forget the story!—and now "*Guinevere's Lover*"! Thoroughly to appreciate the sickly, erotic sentimentality of this much-advertised book, it is a highly tonic preparation to dip first into some of the really big sex novels of the day—or, better, the books by Carpenter and Ellen Key.

For many long, antimacassared, curl-papered, Victorian years, books touching at all truthfully or naturally upon sex were barred as completely as the words "legs" or "stomach." (The older generations had more sense, but neither Beaumont nor Fletcher, Fielding nor Smollett—alas!—could live forever!) Quite suddenly, then, the healthy and hungry growing world, waking to new conditions and new deeds, demanded beef instead of cambric tea. It discovered that men like Balzac and Tolstoi could give it to them in good measure. And thus the growth of the real sex novel—the genuinely inspired work of art—has kept pace with the growth of the people.

And that is as it should be. For

where the truly great work at their forges, there flares ever a white flame, and fire is eternally and inimitably clean.

But alack! It was not only the mighty ones with the consecrated anvils that came; there were hordes of others—weaklings, followers, imitators, caterers to the very beast in man that the Titans had come to crush beneath their hammers. And it is of these that we are speaking to-day, of these that we must speak, for they are more poisonous and more deadly than any known class of writer—the authors of the up-to-date "suggestive" novel, they whom I call the Tabaguis, the jackals of literature.

In the vast and growing pack there are four writers who keep conspicuously busy and prosperous—Robert W. Chambers, Hall Caine, Elinor Glyn, and David Carson Goodman. And the names of the very newest of their contributions are "*The Business of Life*" (Appleton), "*The Woman Thou Gavest Me*" (Lippincott), "*Guinevere's Lover*" (also Appleton), and "*Hagar Revelly*" (Mitchell Kennerley).

Some time ago there was raised among the ignorant followers of the bellwethers a sort of sordid hubbub: Was it decent for Zola to write "*Nana*" and "*Fecundity*"? It was far more than decent; it was sublime. Compare "*Hagar Revelly*" with "*Nana*," and "*The Woman Thou Gavest Me*" with "*Fecundity*," and see where you stand. As a rule, simplicity means a measure of greatness—nearly all the very great masters wrote simply and directly, and nearly all the little writer persons write elaborately, thinking, no doubt, that a large vocabulary helps them toward style, and thence toward genius. But in these instances, the rule has gone wrong. Both "*Hagar Revelly*" and the Hall Caine book have a certain direct and bald method of style that, in the hands of big people, would have served them well. But it is a fact that to write greatly one must put effects out of the mind; the great ones were humble and industrious. These lesser men have been—or so it strikes the meek and humble reviewer—striving to get the

effects that genius couldn't for the life of it help getting.

Some one among the violent partisans of "Hagar Revelly" has widely advertised the fact that the—dare we say "rape"? it was largely used by the publishers—is a very fine piece of writing. With respect to the author of this opinion, this is pure rot. That kind of scene must be written in one of two ways: the simply, unemotionally veracious, or the delicately poetical. Tolstoi could have achieved the first; De Maupassant the second. Goodman never came within a hundred yards of the reality. Since we are "doing" Hagar first, it may be suggested that some one told the author early in life that he was a new-born Turgenieff. He writes that way, but he isn't. He alternates between chilly dullness and discreet salaciousness.

A distinguished contemporary critic has drawn a comparison between Nana and Hagar. Despite the fact that the very connection of the names seems to cheapen Zola's immortal creation, the writer acknowledges gratefully so stern and sound a standard. Hagar—pretty, little, black-haired Hagar, with an eternal ideal of the Respectable Position enshrined in her exceedingly small mind—is another Nana—a Nana minus the bravery and the brightness that made the French heroine lovable in spite of her dreary calling. Nana brought something of courage and beauty to her art—or task. Hagar seems to have brought nothing.

But who wants to hear of the "temptations of the working girl"?—especially a girl who, like Hagar Revelly, seems determined from the outset not to work at all! Nana was at least what she pretended to be. Hagar, from first to last, poses as a virtuous little person, who has been "taken advantage of"—that, I believe, is the accepted and acceptable phrase.

As a matter of fact, Nana, in her fine disregard of morality, is a much healthier-souled creature than Hagar, who, to the bitter end, puts her love-making on a commercial—I mean a legalized—basis, while always striving

to impress on everybody that she is "not that kind of a girl." Nana did not care a blow whether Georges or the count wanted to marry her or not; the first question of Hagar in both her somewhat sordid episodes is: "Are we going to be married—and when?" Mr. Goodman seems to think that this mental question or requirement is what makes a woman virtuous. Greenfield, the ostensible villain of the piece, is the most human figure in the book, a good deal the most pathetic, and far, far the most moral.

So we bring ourselves reluctantly to "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," by Hall Caine.

The following excerpt suggests the graceful way in which the author excuses Mary O'Neill for being the common cheat she is. He does it by the plausible point of view of a venerable priest:

Nature was kind to a young girl. Left to itself it awakened her sex very gently. First with love, which came to her like a whisper in a dream, like the touch of an angel on her sleeping eyelids, so that when she awoke to the laws of life the mysteries of sex did not startle or appall her.

But sex in me had been awakened rudely and ruthlessly. Married without love, I had been suddenly confronted by the lower passion. What wonder that I had found it brutal and barbarous?

What wonder, forsooth! What insane nonsense! If Hall Caine expects a normal, natural, healthy world to sympathize with the woes of a bride who, after her marriage, flatly, and for no particular reason, refuses to become a wife, it is likely that he and his high ideals will be disillusioned. There is by, I think, the merest chance, one fundamental truth in the book: Caine contends that union in marriage without love is worse than union in love without marriage. This cannot be gainsaid, but it does not seem to be upon so solid a rock that he builds the fabric of his drama.

He has tried, among other things, to make a religious novel out of it. A sort of "Ora pro nobis" accompanies the dull pages, like an undercurrent, and a waft of angelic music arrives in time to con-

vince a certain class of reader that Mary O'Neill, now free from her husband, is quite right not to marry the father of her child, because—note this!—the church thinks divorce is wrong. The crudities of the book are veiled in Hall Caine's own sweet way—a cloud of piety, a mist of sentimentality, a bit of "human interest" now and then. But, unfortunately, intelligent people don't read books that way any longer.

An editor once said to a cub reporter: "Write your story as if you were telegraphing it, and every word cost you five dollars." Summed up thus pitilessly, what does "The Woman Thou Gavest Me" come to? A young girl sells herself on her father's account, and, having done so, refuses to keep her side of the contract. When her husband, not altogether unnaturally, looks elsewhere for companionship, her feelings are hurt. She falls in love with another man, has her affair with him in her husband's house, and, on being remonstrated with, leaves for a life of true "working-girl" penury. Her child is born, and her husband divorces her, but she still refuses marriage with the man she loves, and dies just to show how pure she is!

"Guinevere's Lover," by Mrs. Glyn, is much more poorly written, but is somewhat more wholesome morally, in that Guinevere cheats only one man, while Mary O'Neill failed to make good with two. Some women cheat their lovers; some, like Mary, both lovers and husbands; and others merely their husbands—like Guinevere Bohann. Of course, she might have refrained from cheating anybody, but then there wouldn't have been any story—at least, none worth Mrs. Glyn's time and trouble.

It seems to the writer that sickly sentimentality plastered over immorality is rather like a sugar coating over, let us say, asafetida. Sex is not low, but high and splendid; even coarse Rabelaisian sex has something fine and robust about it, but sex that is done up in pink ribbons and cheap lace like a Paris doll is an abomination in the sight of all gods that be. There is nothing

more detestable than the perpetual effort of a certain class of author to whitewash his or her characters, flinging a roseate or a tender violet veil over obvious sins, and justifying everything on earth by the plea of "finer feelings" and "higher emotions." If one must have the Tabouki novel, let us have it neat, not mixed with horrid little French bitters and flavorings.

Does anybody want to know the story of "Guinevere's Lover"? It is merely that of a married woman who has a lover, gives him up, and, after her husband's highly opportune demise, looks forward to the happy hunting grounds of matrimony with "the beloved." This is the story. But the book is made up of saccharine nonsense—love dialogues that no sane lovers ever exchanged, eternal references to Guinevere's sad, gray eyes, or delicate hands, and a sort of general atmosphere of beautiful, denatured passion, which, when occasion offers, proves never really to have been denatured at all!

With the exception of the characterization of Letitia, the mondaine sister, there does not seem to be a single true note struck in the book. Letitia is modern, unimaginative, and rather naturally drawn. For the rest, we have nothing but a dreary sequence of sentimental impressions. Mrs. Glyn seems to have started out with a commonplace "*roman passionnel*," and then set herself diligently to work to sanctify the whole silly business with sentimentality and maudlin meditations. The conversations of the lovers, as has been intimated, are of the sort to exhaust the patience of the reader, "darling," "beloved one," "heart of my heart," "my baby girl," being among the most rational terms of endearment made use of!

Elinor Glyn does not deserve much reviewing space for her book, but one must accept the fact that there are persons who read, and like to read, her. If they would but realize upon how low a mental plane they place themselves by enjoying her literary efforts, it is possible that she would cease to be that appalling thing, a "best seller." Some

optimist recently suggested that her downfall had begun. May it be sure and speedy!

One of the most dangerous, because one of the most gifted of popular modern writers, is Robert W. Chambers. And the reason for this is the almost mechanical facility with which he has learned to wander about danger points without ever losing his balance. It is a curious psychological fact that that which is implied and masked is a hundred times more suggestive than that which is stated openly. Theatrical managers know this, and reap huge harvests from nasty little foreign plays purified just enough to "go" on Broadway. Chambers is not a genius, but he is a highly qualified literary and moral acrobat, and he has mastered his craft in admirable fashion. One takes off one's hat to the brain that can so unerringly and so unexpectedly "draw the line."

For the beauty of Chambers is this: We know by years—really quite a good many years—of experience that nothing would induce him to allow a heroine to go astray from the paths of virtue. This is a sort of fetish with us; we cannot reasonably doubt it—did we do so, where would be our Robert W. Chambers? But he always continues to spin a web of suspense, however certain and unassailable the heroine's impeccability may be. Sure as we are that she *cannot* sin, we still, at the top of every page, have a sneaking idea that this time she may be going to.

"The Business of Life" concerns the love and marriage of a rich young society man, Desmond, and an "exquisite" girl, Jacqueline—Chambers never described a girl who was not "exquisite"—who is an expert in antiques—especially those of a Chinese variety. A married woman who has been in love with Desmond—and tells a great many very unimportant lies to Jacqueline—a heavy husband, who is extraordinarily likable, an acidulated old aunt, who is quite a real person, and a few minor characters, fill out the volume.

The whole theme is the attraction between Desmond and Jacqueline—what

induces it, what injures it, what restores it. Chambers has a Gallic trick of always keeping his "exquisite" girls so high and pure that all the men in his books are going mad over them—rank suggestiveness, of course. The Chinese touches are really charming. One wonders whether Chambers was enlightened regarding them by artistic friends, or whether that remarkably prolific and useful mind of his had some Oriental odds and ends tucked away in pigeon-holes for future reference.

We have been dealing with "The Business of Life" more or less lightly, but it has come to a point when we cannot dismiss public dangers like these with a laugh. Elinor Glyn—yes, because she can at best appeal to a very limited circle of readers. But Chambers, through his undoubted charm of manner and matter, has fastened on the public, and it is time that the public threw him off along with fever-bearing mosquitoes, and tuberculosis, and other perils. Once upon a time he wrote "The Fighting Chance," and other books with real vigor and truth in them. Then he learned the market value of that which is eternally intimated and never fairly stated. His stories, reduced to a simple narrative form, are innocuous; as they are written and published they are almost as salacious as Mendès or Gautier. Any "perfect lady" can read Robert W. Chambers' books. But she would hardly care to read what they were about!

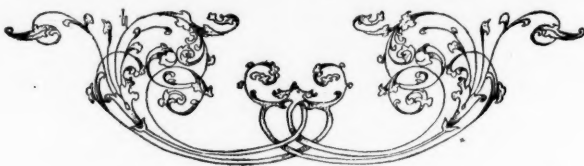
For refreshment, before we close, let us take a breath of air from one really admirable book, which comes under the classification of the "sex novel," yet lies clear of its suggestiveness. It is "Joan Thursday," by Louis Joseph Vance. There is nothing beautiful about this story. The heroine is sordid and heartless—worse, a good deal, than Hagar Revelly. The episodes are crude and sometimes cruel. The narrative marches as inexorably and inevitably as life itself, but *it marches!* There is a very genuine skill in the way Mr. Vance has shown—or, shall we say, shown up?—the shallow emotional tem-

perament of women of Joan's type. As calculating as Hagar, in one sense, she yet keeps a certain curious sensuous and impressionable quality. She does not sin merely because it is to her worldly advantage; there is a saving grace of predilection. One wonders whether the grim ending is entirely true to life. Yet so sure and firm throughout the book is the touch that molds the clay puppets that the reader is feign to believe that what the author is convinced of must be the truth.

This book does not turn the soul toward clouds and moonbeams, but drags and pins it close to the bitter,

ash-strewn earth, yet it is a fine book—a big book, honest and direct. One of these days Louis Joseph Vance, who used to thrill us with gay and blood-thirsty tales of adventure, is going to thrill us with a truly great novel. Good luck to him!

•After all, since "the jungle is large and the cub he is small," we must expect to encounter a certain number of the jackal breed. But we should assuredly go to the nearest temple, with marigolds and other thank offerings, when a real Book comes into our hands. And even one such is worth a whole pack of Tabaqui's!



The Site of a Cottage

A FEW poor, crumbling stones betray
The low foundation's place;
Tall box trees, once so shapely, stray
And straggle, shorn of grace.
Of that bright garden only they
And bouncing Bet's pink face.

Just a plain home, where used to dwell,
Honest, and brisk, and true,
A plain man and his wife; and well
They worked, the long day through
(So old, remembering neighbors tell)
Till nightfall brought the dew.

All's changed. His garden beds are choked,
His flowers, and he, long dead;
A mouser, such as once she stroked,
Rubs soft a wondering head
Where lean these bushes, cobweb-yoked,
And weeds unhindered spread.

Yet while the box in sorry trim
Guards well the ruined plot,
While bouncing Betty's flowers o'erbrim
The weedy, sunken spot,
That sweet home's image need not dim—
Two friends have not forgot!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.

THE PRODIGAL SON'S MOTHER

—BY—

LILY A. LONG

Author of "When Half-Gods Go," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN



AGE sleeps lightly, and Mrs. Moxon was no longer young, though she continued to live sturdily alone, and had managed the farm herself ever since her husband died, three years ago. She would have scoffed at the idea of being nervous, yet she slept lightly and woke easily—as easily as when Tod was a baby, and a change in his breathing was enough to bring her back from the farthest halls of dreamland.

Now she awoke suddenly, with the feeling that she had heard the sound of that creaky step on the back stairs—the step that Tod had called “the burglar trap.” The moonlight was streaming into her room, and she divined that it must be about two in the morning. She lay still, listening intently. The top step was also insecure. If any one *was* creeping up, she would know it when he stepped there. But there was no further sound. She relaxed her listening nerves and was about to compose herself again to sleep when the room door was pushed softly open and a man entered. He had cunningly stepped *over* that betraying top step!

Mrs. Moxon was mistress of her nerves, as a woman who lives alone in the country has need to be. She did not stir, but she watched closely

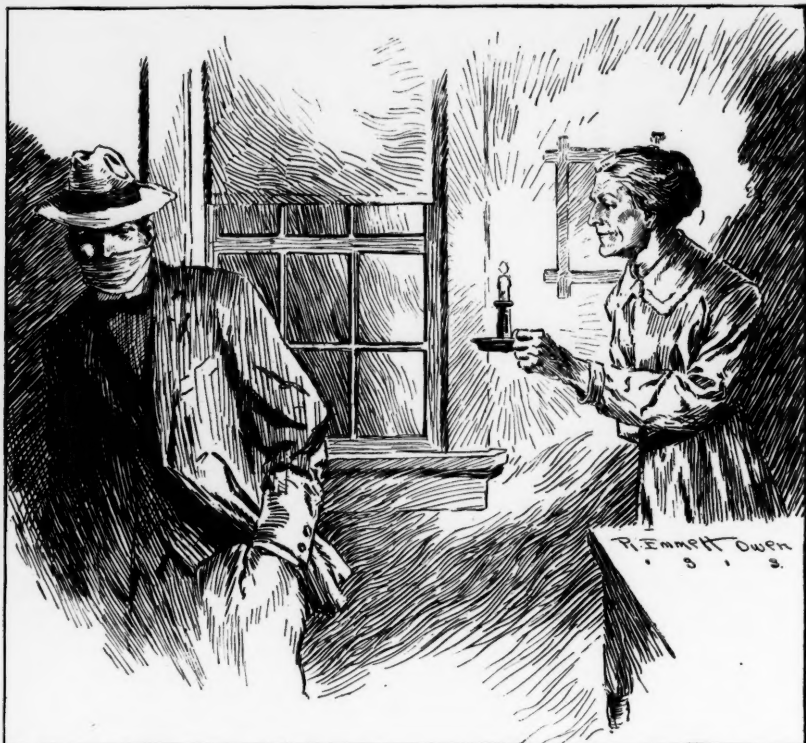
through her eyelashes as the man crossed the floor with swift assurance and stood quiet by the window. The burglar seemed to be enjoying the view. But the moonlight brought out the silhouette of his figure—and Mrs. Moxon's heart began suddenly to pound in her throat. She lay still now because she could not move.

After a moment the man turned from the window, and looked about the moon-flooded room. Then he came softly and swiftly to the bed and looked down at her. She could feel his surprise that any one should be sleeping in *this* bed in his hushed breath as he bent over her. Then he drew back quietly and moved to the door. In a moment he would be gone. Mrs. Moxon sat up suddenly in bed.

“Oh, Mr. Burglar, wait a minute—do wait a minute, please!”

The man had stopped, startled. In a moment Mrs. Moxon had slipped out at the other side of the bed, and had pulled on a snug, flannel dressing gown. She talked fast, while she struggled to light the candle with matches that shook with her excitement.

“The pump in the laundry is out of order, *that's* the trouble. I've been trying and trying to get a man to fix it,



He stood in the doorway, in an attitude that suggested meditated flight, but she held him by her pauseless speech.

but everybody is too busy just now to bother with a little job like that, so your being here is a real godsend. It won't be much trouble, seeing you're here already, and, honest, there isn't anything in the house worth burgling. You'd soon find that out, and I might as well tell you and save you bother. Except eatables. And, my, I guess I'll be glad to get you up a hot supper—though maybe we'd better call it an early breakfast—if you just get that pump going for me!"

She had the candle alight now and she turned toward him. He had not been masked when he stood by the window in the moonlight, but now a handkerchief was tied across the lower

part of his face, and his hat was pulled down almost to meet it. He stood in the doorway, in an attitude that suggested meditated flight, but she held him by her pauseless speech.

"I suppose you think it is funny, my talking so familiar to a burglar, but, land! I guess burglars are just human beings like the rest of us, get down underneath their trade. And any sort of a man ought to know something about handling tools, and have some muscle. Just wait till I get my shoes on; that cement floor in the laundry would chill through my bedroom slippers. That's all right. Now we'll go down. You came up the back stairs, didn't you? Thought I heard you on

the creaky step. I knew the sound, because Tod, my boy, used to creak it the same way when he was creeping up to his room after being out so late that he was scared to let his pa know when it was he came in. Maybe he thought I didn't know, either! Funny how boys think they can fool their mothers," she added, with a quiet laugh. "Just as though mothers didn't know their boys' minds, inside and out!"

The burglar did not answer. He stood aside to allow her to precede him through the kitchen.

"You left the window open, so's you could get out easy, didn't you?" she said, glancing at the open kitchen window. "Slipped your knife under the catch, I suppose. Tod used to do that, but I didn't think any one else would know how it worked. Here's the laundry—mind that turn in the stairs. It's the cistern pump. You anything of a mechanic?"

The burglar nodded silently, picked up a monkey wrench that lay near, and

began to loosen bolts here and there in a purposeful way.

"You take hold of things clever as Tod did," Mrs. Moxon said admiringly. "I'm mighty glad you happened along. I ain't strong enough in the wrists to handle that wrench, and since Neighbor Wilson moved away, there ain't anybody I can call on real handy. You don't mind if I set and watch you, do you?"

The burglar indicated by a curt gesture that he did not mind. Mrs. Moxon sat down on a backless chair and curled her feet up on the pins, away from the cold floor.

"I'm going to make some coffee for you before you go away," she said comfortably, "but it's too soon to start yet. I know that pump. It will take you half an hour to get it fixed. It got out of order same way when Tod was home, and he had to monkey with it no end before he found out what the matter was. But Tod was only a boy then. He left home when he was just



The man had turned from her, and from the light, and was absently examining his tools in his own shadow.

over sixteen, and I haven't seen him —" She checked herself and turned the phrase adroitly. "I haven't heard from him now for nearly three years. Three years ago come Christmas he sent me a five-dollar bill in a letter. Think I spent it? I guess I'd have to be harder up than I have ever been yet before I'd spend *that*. I put it away with his baby picture that has a curl hanging down his innocent forehead, and they are going to be buried with me, both of them."

The man said something that sounded like an inarticulate "Humph!" He was taking the gearing of the pump apart and it required close attention.

"Maybe you think that's foolish," the woman said, "but I don't. Time was when I wouldn't have owned up to it, though. But I'm learning wisdom in my old age. I know now that it ain't good sense to hide your feelings when you have feelings. That was what made the trouble about Tod. His father was a strict man and he didn't believe in showing feelings none. You see, his father had been strict with him, and so, when he had a boy of his own, being old himself and set in his ways from having lived a bachelor many years, he thought that was the only right way to deal with a boy. I didn't dare say it wasn't, because I was a young thing and some scared of him myself, and I used to try to make it up to Tod on the sly. But at the same time I didn't show my feelings much as I might, because I, too, thought that the right way to bring up a boy was to *bring* him up, willing or unwilling. That was what we was parents for, so I thought. Then Tod ran away."

The man was working with his back toward her, but he moved his hands quietly, and she knew that he was listening.

"Lots of boys run away from home for one reason or another. I've noticed since. At first it seemed that I just couldn't bear it. Seemed like a slap in the face to think he'd rather live somewhere else than at home. I reached out after him in my thoughts, like as though I would just draw him back spite of

himself. Partly it was just a frantic mother feeling that he wasn't big enough to take care of himself and I *had* to have him back. Then I began to notice other boys his age, and I saw that they got along by themselves, and that quieted me some. Tod always was as smart as the next one. He had been away most a year when he wrote to me." She paused a moment, as if not certain of her voice. The man, too, was quiet.

"It was just a scrappy little note, saying that he was well and busy, and I was not to worry, and he would write from time to time, when anything happened that was worth writing about. Spite of my being most crazy with hearing from him, that almost made me laugh. Worth writing about! As though it mattered *what* he wrote about, just so's he wrote! But that note did relieve my mind, I'll confess. He hadn't been murdered, and he wasn't in prison, and he had got onto his feet somewhere and somehow and was learning to live, same as all the rest of us have to, and same as he would have had to if he had stayed at home, and then gone out into the world to make his way regular.

"After that I didn't worry more than was natural, seeing as he kept on writing odd times, but never sending his address so's I could write back. I saw from that that he was still a little bitter in his mind. And I thought maybe I guessed why he wouldn't ever open up any chance for talk between us. He had said to himself, when he first set out, that he never would; that he would just *show* us he could get along. And Tod was a great one to stick to his word like that."

The man could not wholly smother a choked laugh, half bitter, half admiring.

"You wonder how I know?" she said composedly. "Why, I almost thought myself into his brain those days. There wasn't an hour when I wasn't saying, 'Tod, Tod,' sort of in the background of my mind, like a brook that is singing in the landscape, and don't make itself heard while other things are going on,



Emmett Owen

"I just got homesick for a sight of the old place, and thought I would slip in at night to look around—Mother—it's me!"

but is clear as anything when maybe there is a still moment and you can listen. So I knew how it was with him—my boy. Until he married."

Her voice caught a little on the word, and she waited before going on. The man had turned from her, and from the light, and was absently examining his tools in his own shadow.

"He sent me just a clipping from a paper showing it, and he never wrote about it at all. After that—I let him go."

The man made a startled movement.

"Of course, I didn't let him go out of my heart," the old lady continued dreamily, "but I let him go out of my thoughts some. Much as I could. You see, he was a man now, and he was

fighting his way through life in his own fashion, same as I was doing in my way. Instead of my having to look out for him, we were equals. We were both just humans, making our own mistakes and struggling out of them best we could, and finding out that we have to do our own learning by ourselves, and that nobody can help very much. Not even mothers or sons—or wives. We are all responsible for ourselves when it comes down to *living*, and not for any one else."

The man nodded thoughtfully. Mrs. Moxon rose slowly.

"If I could tell Tod that," she said softly, "I think maybe he would understand that I ain't ever going to try to run his life for him. I got enough to

do running my own. But I'd like to be friends with him. I'd like to know where he is, and how he is getting along in his fight. We could be comrades—if he'd only forget that we are mother and son. He's a man, now, to lean on; and maybe he's older than I am in some ways."

She paused, but if she waited for a sign, there was nothing to reward her. The man was silent, busy. Mrs. Moxon turned away abruptly.

"I see you'll be through with that, soon's you've screwed it together again, and I'm going up now to make you a cup of coffee. Come right up into the kitchen when you're ready, and wash your hands at the sink." There was a smile in her voice as she added: "That's what Tod used to do!"

In the kitchen, Mrs. Moxon stood still for a moment, her hands tightly clasped against her breast.

"There ain't no use trying force," she murmured to herself.

Then, with hands that shook, she set the coffee brewing and laid out a hasty breakfast on the kitchen table—crisp rolls, cool butter, yellow by its own right, honey in the comb, and big brown eggs half hidden in a white napkin. Then she listened. There was no sound from the basement. She thought of the door leading out into the yard—would he slip so away? She let her hands fall at her side with a gesture of renunciation. If he could go—

"Mother!" a tense voice said in the doorway. "I'm not a burglar—never dreamed of that. I just got homesick for a sight of the old place, and thought I would slip in at night to look around — Mother—it's me!"

Mrs. Moxon stared at him without speaking. She was trembling so that Tod came and put his arms about her, and forced her gently into the chair she had placed for him.

"I have startled you!" he said anxiously. "Of course I have—it was like me to blurt it out without warning! I

always was clumsy, you know. Here, drink some coffee!"

He hastily poured some into the cup designed for him, and held it, steaming hot, to her lips. Mrs. Moxon took a mouthful, and it gave her a chance to put her handkerchief to her eyes. It *was* hot. He watched her anxiously until she wiped her eyes and laughed, somewhat unsteadily.

"All right now?" he asked encouragingly.

"All right—now," she said.

"Talk about nerve!" Tod said admiringly. "Making a burglar play handy-man and fix the pump for you! I don't know a burglar that wouldn't have done it, too, when you went at him in that sensible way. But I was more scared than you were, when I found that you were sleeping in my old room!"

He caught himself up as if his own words gave him food for reflection, and looked at her sideways.

"I'm not much good, mother," he said gravely. "I'm not a burglar, but I'm a failure. If I had ever had anything good to show, I'd have come home. You were right about my feeling that I wanted to show you all that I could succeed by myself. I said to myself that I would never come back till I had. But—I never have. That's all."

"Your—wife?" she asked.

"Left me," he said briefly. "Right, too. I couldn't support her. She—well, she wasn't the sort used to roughing things—she wasn't your sort," he added hesitatingly.

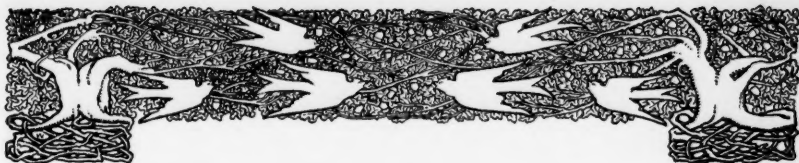
"Those eggs will be cold," she said.

He pulled up another chair to the table, and reached out his hand for the rolls.

"Say, Mrs. Moxon, don't you want a hired man?" he asked, with nervous gayety.

She looked at him for a moment, and he yielded his eyes to her searching gaze.

"Suppose we work the farm on shares, Mr. Moxon," she said.



The Chief Beneficiary

By Goode Richardson

ILLUSTRATED BY J. HENRY

MR. BOBBINS had been bedridden for nearly two years, though he had suffered little pain. His wife had been dead for twenty-five years, and his only son still longer. He spent his unoccupied hours contemplating outwardly the ceiling, and inwardly the years of his life. He had been an honest man; he had been kindly affectioned toward his neighbors, and had helped many of them when they were in trouble; he had never deviated from a strict moral code; he had been a consistent member of the church.

One morning, after thinking such thoughts for an hour, Mr. Bobbins concluded that he was not afraid to die. He grew quite happy, indeed, at the thought of dying.

Suddenly the door of the room flew open, and in came a little child. She stopped, stood on tiptoe, and, with a merry smile of suppressed excitement, tried to look over the side of the bed and see Mr. Bobbins.

Mr. Bobbins lay as if he had not heard the noise of the door. He was smiling, too.

The child crept up to the bed, thrust out her head violently in the direction of Mr. Bobbins, and said: "Boo!" Then she laughed and laughed when Mr. Bobbins acted as if she had frightened him to death.

Mr. Bobbins put out his skinny, old hand and caught her by the back of the dress.

"You little rascal!" said the old man, as he put his other hand on her golden curls.

Slowly he reached under the bolster and drew forth a red box.

"Oh, Mr. Bobbins!" Esther exclaimed, as she seized the box eagerly.

What marvelous building blocks they were! Mr. Bobbins had sent his negro man downtown for them expressly the afternoon before, so as to have them on hand to surprise Esther when she came to see him in the morning. She came nearly every morning.

Esther turned the box upside down on the bed. Then she went over to an old desk in the corner and got from under it several boxes of blocks. She had more toys there than she had at home. Mr. Bobbins pulled the string and rang the bell that brought his colored man, who propped him up on his bolster and pillows, the colored man joking all the while, for he was Esther's friend, too.

Then the old man and the child got down to play. All over the side of the bed they reared castles, and walls, and outbuildings. They peopled them with tin soldiers and little dolls, which they had dressed on former occasions. Then Esther dragged two chairs up to the side of the bed, and these, too, were covered with buildings.

Esther stayed until lunch time, and Mr. Bobbins forgot all about dying.

She was always content to stay with him indefinitely, and play and listen to his stories. Sometimes, when she did



Esther stayed until lunch time, and Mr. Bobbins forgot all about dying.

not come, Mr. Bobbins would send his colored man to the house halfway down the square in which she lived.

When Esther came downstairs, on her way home, she saw several persons sitting in the parlor, looking very serious. She stopped and looked at them.

"Run on now, dear; your mother will be looking for you," said Mrs. Pearson, the niece in whose house Mr. Bobbins lived.

Esther moved on.

The gloomy crowd in the parlor numbered four. There was Mr. Pearson, an energetic young lawyer, who three years before had brought his uncle up from the small town in which he had always lived, to consult physicians; there was Mrs. Pearson, his wife; there were two brothers of the sick man, both well on in the seventies, who had made a special trip to see their brother.

They had been discussing Mr. Bobbins' death in low tones, and had ar-

ranged the most minute details in regard to taking the body home for burial. Each had concealed from the others his hope that the subject of their conversation would soon pass away.

No one had mentioned what was uppermost in the mind of each, the disposition that the sick man had made of his fortune, which they had every reason for supposing was large. Even Pearson and his wife had never referred to it in their talks together. They knew that they had looked after uncle to the best of their ability, although he had never allowed them to bear a cent of his expense. Uncle had told them that he knew he would have been dead long ago had it not been for their care. So the Pearsons felt that they were entitled to the bulk of the estate.

The other relatives also thought that the nephew would inherit the major portion, but were sure that each of them would come in for a liberal share. Their consciences would not permit them to neglect the old man; neither would respectability. But they were all eager for the time when the will should be read to the assembled family.

As the conversation in the parlor had dragged on, they had all been feeling around for an opportunity to speak of the will.

Little Esther appeared before Mrs. Pearson like an inspiration. The instant the front door closed behind her, Mrs. Pearson said:

"That child belongs to some people who live in this block. They have been sending her in here every day to see uncle. They know very well that uncle's mind is enfeebled by age—by disease, I mean. They know that uncle has taken a fancy to the child. Why, I cannot imagine, for she is a most unattractive child. They hope he will leave her his property."

This bomb went off with an explosion of silence that lasted about two minutes.

"Then that child shall stay out of the house, Min; that's all there is to it!" said Pearson.

The way being thus opened, they discussed the will and agreed that Pearson should employ a lawyer, and look through the old man's papers as soon as he was dead.

Esther was debarred from the house on the ground that Mr. Bobbins was too sick to see any one.

The old man fretted for her for three days. To quiet him, Mrs. Pearson told him that Esther was very ill, which very much upset him. A day or two afterward she told him that Esther was dead.

When Mr. Bobbins' colored man came in the next morning, Mr. Bobbins was dead, with one of the child's dolls in his hand.

It was a funeral of dry eyes and glad hearts.

The will was read. The entire estate went to the several members of the family, and each got more than he had expected.

"Mother, I haven't seen Mr. Bobbins since long as—as from here clear up to the corner," said Esther, two days after his death. "I can go to see him now, can't I? 'Cause he said he was going to show me how to make a house clear up to the sky!"

"No, dear, Mr. Bobbins has gone away."

The child looked at her mother, wide-eyed.

"Yes, darling, he has gone away."

"Isn't he ever coming back?"

"No, dear. Mr. Bobbins has gone to heaven, where he is very, very happy, and where there are a great many little children for him to play with and make happy."

The child looked up into her mother's face. Her lips trembled, and her eyes filled with tears. Then her head fell in her mother's lap, and she sobbed:

"Mother, I want to go to heaven where Mr. Bobbins is!"



The Well-Groomed Man

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

ACTUAL beauty is not looked for in the male sex, although man as well as woman may possess it. The attributes that make for beauty usually cause a man to be condemned as effeminate, and are a reproach to his manhood. While the curled and perfumed fop, or he who resembles a walking advertisement for a haberdashery, may elicit unbounded admiration from the vulgar, he excites only the contempt of all manly men and refined women. Strength and virility, or, in other words, energy, are the qualities recognized as appropriate to the male, rather than mere animal beauty; in sculpture these are the splendid characteristics that the great artists of the world have represented so nobly.

Yet, while strength and energy are the qualities indissolubly connected with our conception of noble manhood, they are nevertheless ideal, and place the ideal man on a pinnacle that few in real life are able to reach. The everyday, commonplace man, no matter what his stature may be, must look to other sources for his personal attractions, and in our present state of civilization, the most important of these sources is universally conceded to be his general appearance, or, to sum it up in one word, his *grooming*.

The man who is fastidious about his appearance places cleanliness next to

godliness; to him the most scrupulous neatness of his body and raiment is absolutely imperative. Of all people, the Briton is most to be admired in this respect. He will have his daily tubbing on Mount Sinai or in the Desert of Sahara, and there is simply no excuse for the man who fails to follow his example. If he does not care to carry his tub about with him, as does the Englishman, he can still scrub his body in a tin cup of water, as did the famous prisoner of Libby.

Americans, with their luxurious habits and their inventive genius, have latterly become greatly addicted to the shower, every modern American bathroom being provided with one. Where a bathroom with all up-to-date appliances is not available, the portable shower that can be attached to any faucet answers almost the same purpose; the force of water is not so great, because it does not fall from a height, but it is very acceptable, and men find it an easy, rapid, and satisfactory method of taking their morning scrub.

Although the primary object of the bath is cleanliness, its influence upon the health is very important, as, by the removal of daily impurities, the skin is kept in a state of perfect efficiency; and the tonic effect of water, especially moving water, upon the body is considerable. Then, too, the secretions from

the skin, in consequence of daily cleansing, emit no unpleasant odor; on the contrary, the emanations from a pure, healthy body are decidedly agreeable, in some instances being actually sweet and emitting faintly perfumed odors. As a result of the exhilaration imparted to the circulation by a daily rapid scrubbing, the complexion is generally improved.

In cases where facial blemishes exist, the care of the skin becomes a weighty matter, but as a rule the complexion is healthy in men, owing in great part to their daily shaving. Where a beard is not allowed to grow, the morning shave constitutes the most important part of the toilet. No self-respecting man will permit his fellows, and especially the ladies of his family, to see him in an unshaven state, and for that reason — particularly with Americans—every man shaves himself. Just as bathing has been practiced by the human race from the very beginning of time, so shaving is also very ancient, the Egyptians having had their barbers eighteen centuries before Christ.

Among the Japanese of to-day, shaving is a far more comprehensive "art" than with us; they shave not only the chin, cheeks, and lips, but go over the eyelids, between the lashes and the brows, the forehead, the ear lobes, and, with small, narrow blades, twirl into the nostrils and ears with great dexterity. The method of going over the face twice to secure a deep shave is

condemned as altogether unnecessary; it is conducive to a tender skin, to rashes, and the like, while there is not one hour's difference of growth. A rash following a shave is almost always caused by unclean shaving articles; barber's itch was far more frequent in the days before sanitation was so well understood, and when it was a common practice to employ one brush and razor on a dozen or more faces.

The following is a good formula to use in case of barber's itch or any facial irritation following a promiscuous shave:

Prepared chalk	1 ounce
Coal tar	45 to 180 grains
Simple cerate	5 ounces
Glycerin	4 drams

A small amount of this can be put up; one application may allay the trouble.

There are so many excellent soaps, creams, and powders for shaving purposes on the market, that every one's choice and taste can be met without the necessity of individual formulae;

but the applications for after a shave depend upon idiosyncrasies of the skin, not every one being able to use the same lotions. Some require an astringent, some a soothing wash, others merely a toilet water. For very tender skin, cucumber milk is not only soothing and healing, but beautifying. Toilet vinegar makes an excellent application where an astringent wash is indicated; a little glycerin and rose water is sometimes acceptable. But a liquid of some character is demanded after the shave,



A wash of some kind must be applied after the shave.



To draw a tie and place a stick pin correctly is almost an accomplishment.

if it is only a dash of cold water. Formulae for the above preparations are available for those who desire them.

Facial blemishes, especially blackheads and pimples, are sometimes extremely troublesome during the transition years from adolescence into young manhood; indeed, these conditions may become so obstinate that they defy treatment, and seriously hamper the progress, both social and commercial, of those afflicted. It goes without saying that no amount of grooming will hide these unpleasant defects, and that every possible effort must be made to overcome the trouble. Full directions for the treatment of blackheads and pimples will be sent on application.

The well-groomed man gives considerable attention to his hair, also to the mustache and beard, if he wears them; usually he follows the fashion of the day in this regard, for fashions vary the monotony here as they do in almost

everything else. To-day beards are not worn, fashion bringing them back into vogue about every twenty years.

Nature has provided us abundantly with hair both as a protection and as an ornament. Among the older and less practical races, the hair played a very important rôle in the lives of the people; all the old Chinese warriors had beards set up to give them frightful expressions with which to inspire fear. Modern China is rapidly discarding the queue; thousands have subjected their heads to the barber, and with hair sleekly parted, "belong welly smart like foreign master." The foremost Chinese officials have set the example, and soon the highly ornamental queue and the grotesquely flowing mustache that once distinguished the Oriental will be things of the past.

The latter-day man recognizes the fact that ornamental facial adornment is a savage idea revived, and that all ornamental beards are savage survivals. A beard acts as a blanket, it kills the line of the features and plays the part of a disguise; for this reason it is affected by those who have anatomical defects or weak faces. Many young men who wish to disguise their age and give an impression of seasoned years, grow a beard. In cases of weak throat, a beard is a protection.

There are many types of beards, and when one is worn, the peculiar type that suits one's individuality should be selected. Thus the great Russian reformer, Tolstoi, and the French painter, Meissonier, both wore long, flowing beards, while the full, square beard will always be associated with King Leopold. A well-kept beard often lends an air of dignity and even of importance to a man of otherwise indifferent address; whereas nothing is more slovenly than a neglected one. So oblivious are some men to every sense of the duty that they owe to themselves as well as to their fellow men in this respect that they truly resemble "a bearded owl or a Barbary ape."

Americans have adopted the clean-shaven face, and it has come to be more or less identified with them. Britons

and men of the Continent, however, never have given up the distinguishing mark of their sex, and are particularly fond of wearing the mustache, upon which considerable care is bestowed. It must be admitted that a smart-looking mustache adds much to a man's appearance and attractiveness. Frenchmen will probably always cling to the small mustache with waxed ends. With Americans the flowing or pointed ends have given way to a short fringe commonly called the "toothbrush" mustache. There is nothing particularly smart about this style, and the mustache of the moment among the best-dressed men here and in England, is the type so beloved by the French. It is impossible to keep the ends well pointed, and in the position most becoming to the face, with ordinary cosmetic, and therefore one employs a:

LIQUID MUSTACHE FIXATIVE.

Mastic	1 dram
Sandrac	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce
Colophony	$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce
Alcohol	$1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
Essence of Jockey Club	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce
Ether	1 dram

Dissolve the various resins and filter. To reduce the stickiness, double the quantity of alcohol.

There are prevailing modes in hair dressing for men. At present the hair may be parted on either side, and roached up in shaving-brush fashion, or not parted at all; but it positively must not be parted in the middle if the wearer does not wish himself stamped as a rustic. The hair is allowed to grow upon the neck, merely being trimmed with scissors. Neck shaving is now obsolete, it being recognized that hair in this situation is a proviso of nature's to guard against the injury to the underlying skin from contact with collars of cloth, stiff linen, and so forth. Shaving the neck invites boils and carbuncles, and fashion steps in and says that it is no longer *à la mode*.

Careful men of course guard against hair troubles, of which dandruff and baldness are the most conspicuous. A medical wag recommends the following three means of preventing baldness:

"Oil the scalp occasionally; avoid germs that cause skin diseases; and don't have a baldheaded man for a father." As a matter of fact, the advice is good, especially oiling the scalp. A dandruff corrective containing olive oil will be sent to applicants.

The average man regards any special attention to his hands, particularly the nails, as a useless waste of time and savoring of the dandy or the dilettante. It is decidedly better to err on the side of the dandy than to disregard the hands altogether, which so many unhappily do. A nicely kept hand, with nails well trimmed, cleaned, and lightly polished, at once stamps its owner as a man of refinement and careful habits.

Nails that have been grossly neglected for years require the aid of a professional to put them in good condition. After several visits to the manicurist, a little daily grooming will keep them in order.

Discolorations from tobacco, dyes, and so forth can be removed with a weak solution of oxalic acid—one dram to six ounces of water—or salts of lemon, two drams to six ounces of water. A nonpoisonous solution consists of citric or tartaric acid, one-half ounce to eight ounces of rose water. If the hands show similar neglect, they should be softened and whitened with the following mixture:

Zinc oxide	2 drams
Boric acid	1 dram
Almond meal	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Lanoline (anhydrous)	$1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
Glycerin	2 drams
Rose water	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce

Rub well into and on the hands, and cover with a pair of loose gloves. It is best applied at bedtime, and allowed to remain on during the night; after a few applications, the hands will show great improvement.

Similarly the feet should be gone over at least once a week, subjected to a vigorous massage with olive oil, all callosities, corns, and bunions removed, and the nails pedicured. Many tired and jaded men take a new lease on life after the rejuvenation of feet that have caused them years of suffering, added

appreciably to their age, and prevented them from appearing to the best advantage. Feet that have been allowed to tyrannize over one to this extent should be treated by a chiropodist, and after that it is possible with home care to keep them in good condition. A dermatologist gives the following two formulæ:

FOR BUNIONS.

Carbolic acid	2 drams
Tincture of iodine	2 drams
Glycerin	2 drams

To be applied with a camel's-hair brush daily.

CORNS.

Strong acetic acid	1 dram
Tincture of iodine	1 dram
Mucilage	2 drams

Paint on the corn at bedtime for six successive nights, then soak the foot in hot water from ten to fifteen minutes, and the corn can be picked out; if not, repeat the treatment. Care must be taken not to spread this on the surrounding tissue.

Clothes do not always make the man, but they wield a powerful influence, and are a mighty factor in the impression that he makes and the position that he holds in his little world. The man who is well dressed knows it, and he knows that others know it; this gives him an air of assurance, of confidence, of belief in himself, that is aptly illustrated in the following little incident. A young man with an unconquerable belief in his ability along a certain line, which was not shared by his family or friends, applied to the head of a great concern for a certain position. The "head" looked him over—the young man's belief in himself was a trifle amusing. He saw a remarkably clean, faultlessly groomed, modestly dressed individual, with a dogged belief in his capacity. Said the "head":

"Why, a young man of your appearance should not be looking for a job."

"I won't be after you have engaged me," was the answer.

He was engaged, and now stands with one foot in the shoe of his "head."

A man need spend no more time or money in dressing well than in dressing

badly. Youngsters make the mistake of getting all the fashions, and wearing them at once. Short men make the mistake of dressing conspicuously; they rarely see that certain ultra fashions are not for them; they should never wear fancy waistcoats, but they usually do. The well-dressed man wears clothes that suit him and that are proper for the occasion.

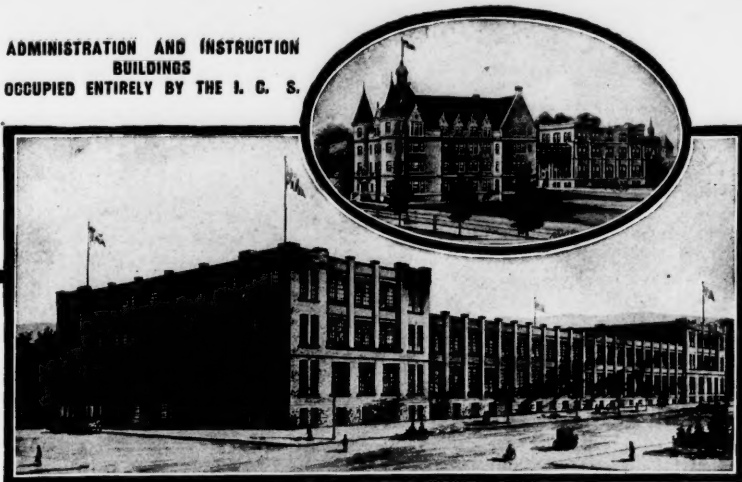
The well-groomed man does not run to extremes in styles; the cut of his clothes, especially of his trousers, never varies. Tight trousers are exceedingly unbecoming to most men, and the loose, wide cut is clumsy and ugly.

If one goes to a tailor, one has a wider range of materials to choose from, and can select such as will wear well. Hard worsted does not gather dust; it does not stretch and get out of shape, but it creases. The smartest trousering is pure cashmere, but the man of limited means should adhere to serge and worsteds. Cheap serge is the most expensive in the end, whereas the highest-priced serge is none too cheap for the satisfaction it gives. Navy blue of the first quality is never out of fashion among careful dressers, and the cut never varies; the coat is a double-breasted reefer that buttons high, and the waistcoat is single-breasted, without a collar.

Sometimes the mistake is made of wearing striped trousers with a blue coat. This is atrocious; white is the only other color that can be worn with blue. Two pairs of trousers should always be made for one coat and waistcoat. If the coat is still good after outwearing two pairs of trousers, it is best to match the material as nearly as possible in the same weave, and have another pair made.

The well-groomed man wears socks to match his shoes; "emotional" socks have gone out of fashion, and white socks are in poor taste except with white shoes for out-of-town wear. An effort is being made to introduce colored stiff collars here; they are being worn in France and England, but it is doubtful if Americans will take them up. The semistarched shirt, with

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Civil Service
Railway Mail Clerk
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Stenography & Typewriting
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THE WELL-GROOMED MAN

plaited bosom and double soft cuffs, continues in favor, and is comfortable and generally becoming.

It is curious that men who are otherwise careful in the matter of clothes should show so little judgment when it comes to collars. Few men wear collars that at all times fit perfectly; they may fit until they have been laundered, or they may fit one shirtband and not another, or one style of collar may fit while another is most unbecoming. Indeed, most men are singularly indifferent in this respect, and a good many are equally lax in the matter of ties and the manner in which they are drawn. Every father should teach his young son how to wear a tie and how to place a stickpin. It is much better not to use a pin at all than to have one projecting two-thirds out of the tie most of the time, for it will work out unless it is dug in—two inches below the knot—through two folds of the tie, then out at the front, then in again; this insures its remaining in position.

A new evening tie that buttons in the back is being introduced. It consists of a neck band with two additional ends arranged to form the knot, making it possible to wear the tie without knotting the bow each time it is put on, while avoiding the earmarks of a ready-made tie. In adjusting it, the wearer can put it into shape, and thus give it a personal touch. The tie also buttons in front, so that it will not slip up, and should prove a boon to all those who struggle with the evening tie; judging from the very few ties that are correctly done, their name is legion.

The man who gives thought to his appearance provides himself with a variety of hats. Bizarre headwear is never in good taste, and here, as elsewhere, the careful dresser shows much conservatism. Soft felt hats are very modish. With a Tuxedo coat, the derby or the soft hat are the only styles permissible, yet occasionally one sees a combination as frightful as an opera hat worn with a dinner jacket. A silk top-

per is the only thing that goes with a swallowtail, and in selecting the shape it is imperative to consult one's height and features, otherwise the most distinguished piece of man's apparel may make its wearer look ridiculous.

It will be seen that the well-dressed man is allowed very little license in the choice of his clothes. The same conservatism should be exercised in gloves and shoes; gray gloves being the correct thing for formal wear, and white ones for full dress. All of which makes it an easy matter to appear well under all circumstances and upon a very slender purse.

Shoes, when not being worn, should be placed on shoe trees; the pockets of one's clothing should never be stuffed out; coats should always be hung in hangers, and trousers placed in stretchers.

In clothing that fits the wearer and the hour, with immaculate and faintly scented linen, one may indeed feel one's self every inch a man.

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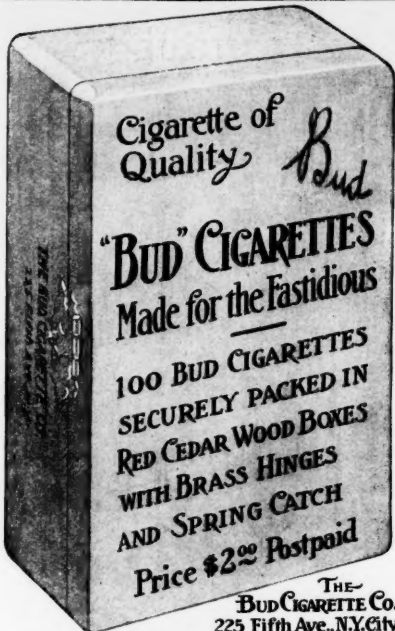
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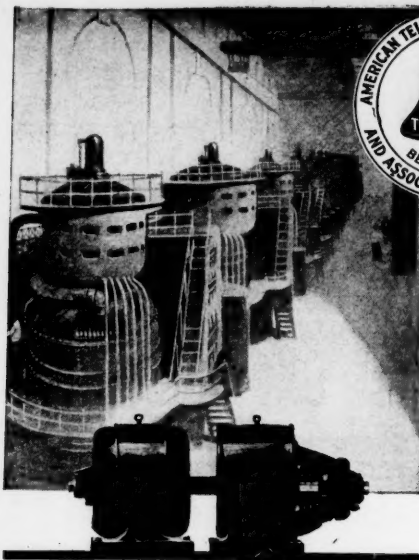
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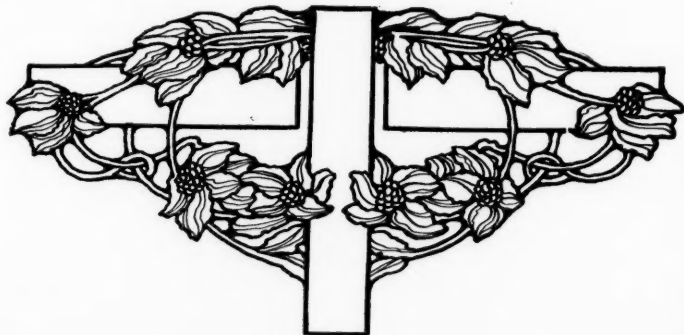
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By LEROY SCOTT

Beginning in WOMEN'S STORIES, month-end number for January

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